



Lud. The Guernier and el. sa.

T H E
L A D I E S L I B R A R Y

VOLUME THE THIRD.

WRITTEN BY A LADY.

PUBLISHED BY
SIR RICHARD STEELE.

THE SEVENTH EDITION.

L O N D O N :

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MDCCLXXII.



T O

Mrs. S T E E L E.

M A D A M,

* I * F great obligations re-
* * ceived are just motives
* * for addresses of this
* * kind, you have an unquestion-
able pretension to my acknow-
ledgments, who have conde-
scended to give me your very
self. I can make no return for

A 3 fo

DEDICATION.

so inestimable a favour, but in acknowledging the generosity of the giver. To have either wealth, wit, or beauty, is generally a temptation to a woman to put an unreasonable value upon herself; but with all these, in a degree which drew upon you the addresses of men of the amplest fortunes, you bestowed your person where you could have no expectations but from the gratitude of the receiver, tho' you knew he could exert that gratitude in no other

returns

DEDICATION.

returns but esteem and love. For which must I first thank you for what you have denied yourself, or for what you have bestowed on me?

I owe to you; that for my sake you have overlooked the prospect of living in pomp and plenty, and I have not been circumspect enough to preserve you from care and sorrow. I will not dwell upon this particular; you are so good a wife, that I know you think I rob you of more than I give, when

DEDICATION.

I say any thing in your favour to my own disadvantage.

Whoever should see or hear you, would think it were worth leaving all the world for you ; while I, habitually possessed of that happiness, have been throwing away impotent endeavours for the rest of mankind, to the neglect of her for whom any other man, in his senses, would be apt to sacrifice every thing else.

I know not by what unreasonable prepossession it is, but, methinks, there must be something
austere

DEDICATION.

austere to give authority to wisdom,
and o cannot account for having
only rallied many seasonable senti-
ments of yours, but that you are
too beautiful to appear judicious.

One may grow fond, but not
wise, from what is said by so lovely
a counsellor: Hard fate, that you
have been lessened by your perfec-
tions, and lost power by your
charms !

That ingenuous spirit in all
your behaviour, that familiar
grace in your words and actions,
has for this seven years only inspi-
red

DEDICATION.

red admiration and love, but experience has taught me, the best counsel I have ever received, has been pronounced by the fairest and softest lips, and convinced me that I am in you blest with a wise friend, as well as a charming mistress.

Your mind shall no longer suffer by your person, nor shall your eyes for the future dazzle me into a blindness towards your understanding. I rejoice in this publick occasion to shew my esteem for you ; and must do you the justice

DEDICATION.

justice to say, that there can be no virtue represented in all this collection for the female world, which I have not known you exert as far as the opportunities of your fortune have given you leave. Forgive me, that my heart overflows with love and gratitude for daily instances of your prudent œconomy, the just disposition you make of your little affairs, your chearfulness in dispatch of them, your prudent forbearance of any reflexions that they might have needed less vigilance had you disposed

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disposed of your fortune suitably; in short, for all the arguments you every day give me, of a generous and sincere affection.

It is impossible for me to look back on many evils and pains which I have suffered since we came together, without a pleasure which is not to be expressed, from the proofs I have had in those circumstances of your unwearied goodness. How often has your tenderness removed pain from my sick head? How often anguish from my afflicted

afflicted

DEDICATION.

flicted heart? With how skilful patience have I known you comply with the vain projects which pain has suggested, to have an aching limb removed by journeying from one side of a room to another; how often the next instant travelled the same ground again, without telling your patient it was to no purpose to change his situation? If there are such beings as guardian angels, thus are they employed; I will no more believe one of them more good in its incli-

DEDICATION.

inclinations, than I can conceive it more charming in its form than my wife.

But I offend, and forget that what I say to you is to appear in publick : You are so great a lover of home, that I know it will be irksome to you to go into the world even in an applause. I will end this, without so much as mentioning your little flock, or your own amiable figure at the head of it : That I think them preferable to all other children, I know is the effect

· DEDICATION.

effect of passion and instinct;
that I believe you the best of
wives, I know proceeds from
experience and reason.

I am, MADAM,

Your most obliged husband,

and most obedient,

humble servant,

RICHARD STEELE.



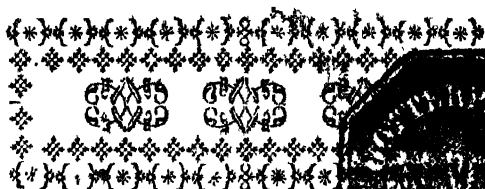


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T H E



T H E

L A D I E S L I B R A R Y

R E L I G I O N.

RELIGION in the general respects God, as the object and centre of all its acts and offices. For, upon supposition that there is such a being as God, and that there are such beings as reasonable creatures, or capable subjects of religion, it will necessarily follow, that there must be some religion or other, to tie and oblige these creatures to that God. For by God we mean a being that has all possible perfections in him, and is the supreme cause and fountain of all other beings and perfections; and such a being, we must needs acknowledge, does not only deserve the worthiest acts of religion that reasonable creatures, who alone are capable of understanding his worth, can render to him, but has also an unalienable right to exact and require them; and that not only upon account of his own essential desert, for whatever he deserves he has a right to demand, but also upon account of the right he has to reasonable creatures,

RELIGION.

who owe their beings to him, and all their capacities of serving him; and so cannot dispose of themselves, without manifest injury to him, contrary to his will and orders. By reasonable creatures, we mean beings that are derived from God, and are endowed by him with a capacity of understanding him and themselves; and such creatures must necessarily stand obliged to render him such acts as are suitable to, and due acknowledgments of, the perfections of his nature, and their own dependence upon him; and this obligation is that which we call Religion; a word which, from its derivation, signifies binding, or obliging us to God; wherefore "true religion, in the general, is the obligation of reasonable creatures to render such acts of worship to God, as are suitable to the excellency of his nature, and their dependence upon him." which definition includes both the doctrines and duties of religion. For the doctrines are the reasons by which it obliges us to the duties. and as there is no duty in religion but what derives its tie and obligation from some doctrine contained in it; so there is no doctrine in religion but what ties and obliges us to some duty that is enjoined by it. When therefore I call religion an obligation, I include in that term all those doctrines of it, concerning God, his nature, and his transactions with his creatures, which are the reasons by which we stand obliged to render all acts of worship to him. But, for the better understanding the nature of true religion, it is necessary we should distinguish it into Natural and Revealed. By Natural religion I mean "the obligation which natural reason lays upon us, to render to God all that worship and obedience, which, upon the consideration of his nature, and our dependence upon him, it discovers to be due to him." For God having planted in us a rational faculty, by the exercise of which we are naturally led into the belief of his being, the sense of his perfections, and the acknowledgment of his providence, he expects we should follow it, as the guide and director of our lives and actions; and whatsoever

ever this faculty does naturally, and in its due exercise dictate to us, is as much the voice of God as any revelation. For whatever it naturally dictates, it must dictate by his direction, who is the Author of its nature, and who having framed it to speak such a sense, and pronounce such a judgment of things, has thereby put his word into its mouth, and does himself speak through it, as through a standing oracle, which he has erected in our breasts, to convey and deliver his own mind and will to us.

Whatsoever then natural reason, rightly exercised, teaches us concerning God, and our duty towards him, is true religion, and does as effectually bind and oblige us to him, as if it had been immediately revealed by him. It teaches us, that God is infinitely wise and just, and powerful and good; that he is the Fountain of our beings, the Disposer of our affairs, and the Arbitrator of our state both here and hereafter; and by these doctrines it obliges us to admire and adore him, to fear and love him, to trust and obey him. And this is Natural religion, which consists of such doctrines as natural reason teaches us, concerning God, and his nature, and Providence; and of such duties, as it infers from those doctrines, and enforces by them. All the doctrines of this religion, upon which it founds its duties, being eternal verities, as they must necessarily be, being all deduced from the immutable nature of God and things, all the duties of it must be morally, that is, eternally good and reasonable; because these doctrines are the eternal reasons upon which they are founded, and by which they oblige. Whatsoever then is a duty of natural religion, must oblige for ever, because it obliges us by an eternal reason; and so can never be dispensed with, or abrogated, till the natures of things are cancelled and reversed, and eternal truths are converted into lyes.

In short, therefore, Natural religion has only natural reason for its rule and measure, which, from the nature of God and things, deduces all those eternal reasons, by which it distinguishes our actions into honest and dishonest,

RELIGION.

decorous and filthy, good and evil, necessary and sinful. For it does not make them good or evil by judging them so, but if it judges truly, it judges of them as it finds them; and unless it finds them good and evil in themselves, upon some eternal reason for or against them, its judgment is false and erroneous. The objective goodness or evil that is in the actions themselves, is not the measure of our natural reason; but our natural reason, judging truly concerning them, is the measure of our choice or refusal of them; for be our action never so good or evil in itself, unless we have some eternal reason for or against it, we cannot judge it so, and unless we judge it so, we cannot reasonably choose or refuse it; but as soon as ever we have judged or pronounced it good or evil, upon an eternal reason, we stand obliged by that judgment to do or forbear it. Thus right reason pronouncing such actions good, and such evil, is the law of nature, and those eternal reasons upon which it so pronounces them, are the creed of nature; both which together make natural religion. And by this religion was the world governed, at least the greatest part of it, for some thousands of years, till by long and sad experience it was found too weak to correct the errors of mens minds, and restrain the wild extravagance, of their wills and affections; and then God, out of his great pity to lost and degenerate mankind, vouchsafed to us the glorious light of revealed religion, which, in the largest acceptation of it; includes all natural religion, as well all that it proposes to be believed, as what it requires to be done, the doctrines as well as the duties of it, both which are contained in that revelation of his will, which God has made to the world, to which it has superadded several doctrines and duties of supernatural religion.

But, strictly speaking, Revealed religion, as it is distinguished from Natural, consists of such doctrines and duties as are knowable and discoverable only by revelation, as are not to be deduced and inferred by reasoning and discourse,

discourse, from any necessary or natural principles, but wholly depend upon the counsel and good-will of God. And where things depend entirely upon God's will, and their being or not being lies wholly in his free disposal, it is impossible that our natural reason should ever arrive at the knowledge of them, without some revelation of his will concerning them. For in such matters as these, where the will of God is absolutely free, reason without revelation has neither necessary nor probable causes and principles to argue from; and therefore can make neither certain conclusions, nor so much as probable guesses concerning them. Man must necessarily remain entirely in the dark, till such time as God had revealed to him which way his will is determined; and of such matters as these consists all revealed religion, strictly so called. For though God has made several revelations of his will; yet the subject matter of them was for the main always the same, the doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the duties that are subsequent to it, which, from the promise that God made to Adam upon his fall, "The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head," to the last promulgation of the gospel, has been the great theme of all divine revelation. For what else was that revelation which God made to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," but only the dawning of the gospel? which is nothing but glad tidings of the Mediator. What was the Law of Moses, but only the same gospel shining through a cloud of types and symbolical representations? And what are all the succeeding prophecies of the Old Testament, but only the same gospel still shining clearer and clearer, till at last it broke forth in its meridian brightness? It might be easily demonstrated, that from Adam to Moses, from Moses to the prophets, from the prophets to Jesus Christ, the main scope and design of all divine revelation has been the gradual discovery of this great mystery of the mediation. Thus revealed religion was, for the matter of it, always the same, though it was not

always revealed with the same perspicuity, but cleared up by degrees from an obscure twilight to a perfect day. Wherefore Christianity, which in strictness is nothing but the doctrine of the mediation, together with its appendant duties, ought not to be looked upon as a new religion of 1700 years date; for, in reality, it is as ancient as the fall, and was then preached to Adam in that dark ~~and obscure manner~~ clearly repeated, though very obscurely still, in God's covenant with Abraham; and again, after that, it was much more amply revealed in the types and figures of the law of Moses; which yet, like painted glass in a window, did, under their pompous shew, still darken and obscure the holy mysteries within them, which were nothing but the doctrines and laws of the Christian religion. Judaism was only Christianity veiled, and Christianity is only Judaism revealed.

Thus, you see, the religion of the Mediator was the principal subject of all divine revelation: and this, without revelation, natural reason could never have discovered; because the whole of it depended upon the free will of God. For whether he would admit of any Mediator or no, whether he would admit his own Son to be our Mediator or no, whether he would deposit such inestimable blessings for us or no in the hands of our Mediator, was entirely left to his free determination; and there was no necessary cause, either within or without him, nor any probable one neither, that human reason could ever have discovered, which could incline or determine him one way or other. Till such time then as he revealed his will to us, we were left entirely in the dark as to this matter, and had no manner of principles to argue from, or so much as to guess by. This therefore is strictly the Revealed religion, as it is distinguished from the Natural. But since, together with Revealed religion, God has put forth a second edition of Natural, which was almost lost and grown out of print, through the wretched negligence and stupidity of mankind; and since
he

he has not only revealed them together, but also incorporated them into one, religion as it is now framed, and constituted, by this happy conjunction of natural with revealed, may be thus defined: "It is the obligation of rational creatures to render such acts of worship to God, through Jesus Christ, as he himself hath instituted, and are in their own natures suitable to his excellencies and their dependence upon him." By which acts of worship I do not mean such only as are immediately directed to, and terminated upon God, as all those are which are contained in the first table of the decalogue, but all those acts in general which God has commanded, and being performed on a religious account, out of homage and obedience to God's will and authority, are as truly and properly acts of worship, to him, as prayer, praise, or adoration.

It will be easy from this short account of the nature of religion, to collect what principles are necessary to the founding and securing its obligation.

God being the great object of all religion, it must be absolutely necessary, in order to our being truly religious, that we believe that God is.

Religion being an obligation of us to God, that this obligation may take effect upon us, it is necessary we should believe that he concerns himself about us, and consequently that he governs the world by his providence.

Religion obliging us to render all due acts of worship to him, to enforce this obligation upon us, it is necessary we should believe that he will certainly reward us if we render those acts to him, and as certainly punish us if we do not.

These acts of worship, which religion obliges us to, being such as are suitable to the excellency of God's nature, to enable us to fulfil this obligation, it is necessary we should have right apprehensions of the nature of God.

Religion obliging us to render all these acts of worship to God, in and through Jesus Christ, to our performing this, it is necessary we should believe in his mediation.

These reflexions, as little as they seem to be adapted to the sex to whom they are addressed, will easily be brought within their reach by application; and the satisfaction it may give their minds to see on what foundation religion in general, and the Christian religion in particular, is established, will more than recompense the pains they may at first take in so serious and uncommon a study. It will require their attention; but then what subject can deserve it so much as that which is the surest guide to eternal life?

If men were not very ingenious in framing excuses for their folly, and in the contrivance and pursuit of ruin, it would seem very strange that the gospel, which was designed to be the great instrument of our happiness, should be alledged to discourage and damp our endeavours for it: That the gospel, whose great end is to fill our minds with joy, peace, and hope, should be traduced as an enemy to our pleasure. But so it is; and therefore, as little colour or appearance of argument as there is in this objection, we will not pass it by without examining it.

Religion ever had, and always must have, the character of its Author visibly stamped upon it. Nothing that is not infinitely kind and infinitely wise can be found in any part of revelation truly divine; from whence we may rationally conclude, that the great aim of God, in the establishing religion, is to advance the happiness of men, and to advance it in a method consonant to those principles he has implanted in them. Nor did any one inspired author ever think otherwise. "He that keepeth the law," says Solomon, "happy is he." "Great peace have they that love thy law," says the Psalmist, "and nothing shall offend them." And again says Solomon, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." That this was to be understood of actual and present happiness, in this life, is apparent from what follows a little after: "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour: her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace: She is
" a tree

“ a tree of life to those that lay hold upon her.” And tho’ the gospel, as a higher and more perfect dispensation, does propose to us, as our great and chief end, life and immortality; yet it does by no means exclude us from happiness here, but rather establishes it upon proper and firm foundations, and fences it about with impregnable bulwarks. “ Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Now the fruit of the Spirit is joy, peace,” &c. Again; “ Now the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing, and make you abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Nor can I indeed conceive how the state of a righteous and holy soul should be other than a happy and blessed one. The belief, and confident expectation of a heaven, must needs be more transporting and ravishing than the richest fancy of a sinner; and that security, both in respect of this and a future life, which a good man enjoys in the protection of God, and the assurance of his favour who is Almighty, Immutable, &c. must infinitely exceed any thing that a sinner can attain to, and must exclude those uneasy fears which frequently interrupt the sinner’s enjoyment, and overcast his hopes. He who loves God and virtue, cannot but be happy in the daily practice and enjoyment of what he most delights in; and he who has subdued his passions, and overcome the world, cannot choose but reap the daily fruits of so glorious a conquest, and be constantly entertained with pleasing reflexions and delightful prospects. If he should enjoy nothing else, that sovereignty, liberty, magnanimity, and divine charity, and enlargement of soul which he thereby gains, were an abundant reward of this victory. A good man has the best title to the blessings of this life, and the glories of another. He enjoys this world with as great security as wisdom and moderation; and has an assured hope of a

far better when he quits this: The anticipation of which, by faith, love and hope, doth at once facilitate and confirm his conquests over all unworthy lusts, and entertain him with an unexpressible satisfaction and pleasure.

For this reason I shall discourse a little of happiness, without that immediate regard to another life which might be expected; not judging myself obliged either to prove the certainty of it, or to demonstrate the reasonableness of embracing misery during the space of this short life, in expectation of that perfect and eternal happiness which is promised hereafter; since it is plain enough from the ordinary course of providence, that the happiness of this life and the other are not incompatible: But on the contrary, that that wherein the life and being of true happiness in this world does consist, is but a necessary introduction to, or qualification of us for, the happiness of another.

But what becomes then of the doctrine of the cross? This is a very soft and mild commentary upon that of our Saviour: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me:" Which is not so formidable an objection as it may at first sight seem. It is true, suffering through all the progress and stages of evils, even to the last, that is, death itself, was a common, nay almost universal duty in the beginning of Christianity, being indispensably necessary to the propagation of the gospel; but blessed be God the reason of that duty has long ago ceased. And all that I can think necessary to be said here, in pursuance of my design, to shew that religion is the true way to happiness, temporal and eternal, is, that the pleasures of those confessors and martyrs far out-weighed their sufferings while they lived; that when they suffered death itself, the time was come when they must exchange temporal for eternal happiness. Nor does this at all infringe the truth of my proposition, which does not vainly assert an eternal duration of happiness in this life, but only teaches the possibility of attaining it. And I think the death of martyrs
and

and confessors is rather a confirmation than confutation of this opinion, teaching us plainly, that in despite of all calamities, it is not only possible to live but to die happily; which last is no small accession to temporal happiness. From the little that has been said on this occasion, it is easy to form an answer to what is objected from St. Paul: "If in this life only we have hope *in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." It is confessedly, indisputably true, that had these Christians been destitute of that hope which was their support, they had sunk under the weight of such sufferings, and so had been the most miserable of all men. But since their hopes did not only support them under afflictions, but also render them somewhat more than conquerors; all that can follow hence is, that the resurrection and eternal life are unquestionable truths, and that he who believes them as firmly as the confessors and martyrs did, may, like them, be happy, though a thousand seas of calamities and troubles should break in upon him.

As to mortification, which is a duty of perpetual obligation, for the purity of religion is still the same, this did at first signify the renunciation and extirpation of Jewish lusts, according to that of St. Paul, "Mortify therefore your *members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry;" and it is still the same thing. Whatever difficulty we are to encounter with, in the performance of this duty, it must be vanquished, for it is impossible to be wicked and happy. A wicked man is his own hell; every passion, every lust is a fiend, a fury that does lash and torment him. And all this the Heathens themselves did not only constantly acknowledge, but also paint out with as lively eloquence, as any Christians could ever do; their experience, over whom sin had an uncontrolled dominion, most effectually convincing them of the outrages, tyranny, and unspeakable mischiefs of wicked and abominable passions. Nay so manifest is it that the subduing these irregular passions is necessary to our happiness, that even the Epicureans themselves,

selves, notwithstanding their confining the happiness of man to this short life, and by a probable consequence resolving it ultimately into the enjoyments of the body, did yet look upon themselves as extremely injured by Tully and others, when they represented them as revolted from, and enemies to virtue. It is not my business here to examine what foundation for virtue their philosophy could leave, or what rank and place they could assign it; it is enough that they could not but acknowledge it as necessary to happiness.

It is true, mortification in the gospel sense requires us not only to restrain these irregular lusts, but also not to over-rate and over-value this world, and the things of it. Not to look upon this life as our only and chief portion, and dote upon it with fondness and passion; and I do not think that this is any thing more than what is implied and included in the former notion of mortification. This moderation of our inclinations to the world being a proper and necessary foundation of the former abstinence; it being very improbable that he who values and dotes upon the world above all things, should refrain from irregular pursuits and enjoyments of it. Now even this degree of mortification, and the necessity of it in order to happiness, was taught and recommended by the wise men among the Heathens, as well as by our Saviour and his Apostles; by those conducted by the light of nature, as by those conducted by the light of revelation. Take this together with the discipline which promotes it, I mean the observation of great abstinence from sensual pleasure, and no Monk or Anchorite can speak with a more glorious contempt of the world than a Stoick: But their flights, who would allow the body, the world and the things of it, no place nor degree in the number of good things, are too daring and bold to lay any stress upon. Take then the opinion of other philosophers, who allowed these their proper place and value, and you will find that mortification was ever thought by the light of nature subservient to our true happiness. Hierocles in the beginning of his divine comments, gives us a short but full account of the Pythagorean,

Pythagorean, and, I may add, Platonick philosophy in this point. The substance of which is, "The business of philosophy is to purify the soul of man from sensual lusts and inordinate passions, and to transform it into the likeness and image of God; this is that which it pursues, by discovering to us excellent truths, and by recommending to us the practice of excellent virtues." But this was that philosophy which the best and ancientest of the heathens looked upon as the only way to happiness; so far were they from judging it inconsistent and incompatible with it. Nay they deemed this very state of virtue, a state of more exalted happiness, and an image of the divine life.

Hence is that little less than inspired heat of rapture of Tully, "When the soul having discovered and entertained virtue, hath extinguished its fondness for, and indulgence of the body, and stifled lust as the reproach and stain of its honour and beauty, and hath put off all dread of death and pain, &c." What can be said, or so much as fancied, more blessed than the state of such a man? Nay, after all, the greatest patrons and abettors of pleasure did ever acknowledge this moderation in our passions and enjoyments indispensably necessary to our happiness.

It is wonderful how much the followers of Epicurus gloried in his abstinence; that these voluptuaries should prescribe and practise the doctrine of mortification! But this they were compelled to do by the irresistible force of reason: For how can he who dotes upon the world, and melts in soft and sensual pleasures, be able to secure the repose of his mind against those melancholy alterations which may daily, and some time or other will certainly befall himself, and his enjoyments? On what foundation can the peace and liberty of his mind be established, or can he be happy, who is distressed by every change of weather, and is divided and distracted between numerous contrary passions, and a slave to each?

To conclude, The scripture is so far from denying, that it affirms the possibility of obtaining present happiness, nor are the sufferings of confessors and martyrs, or the

the doctrine of mortification, any prejudice to this assertion; for neither affliction nor mortification are inconsistent with the true happiness of man. That affliction is not, the examples of those very martyrs and confessors triumphing over it, do sufficiently evince. That mortification is not, is unanimously confessed by the suffrages of such as were conducted by the light of nature; of such too as were intirely devoted to the pleasures of this life, and that upon undeniable grounds.

We have seen in the preceding pages, that religion is not only the way to happiness in the next world, but in this also. The softer sex, who are too apt to centre it in things that cannot at all contribute to make them happy, may be at first surpris'd to find it asserted that happiness does not consist in honour, dignities, wealth, shew, dress, and the like, but is confined to religion and piety, and yet to be met with in the present as well as the future life. But if they will condescend so far as to give attention to what will be farther said on so important a subject, I doubt not but their reason will be convinced, whether they reduce their judgment to practice or not.

Nothing is so proper and so necessary as piety and devotion to complete and crown all their other excellencies. This is the salt which seasons all sacrifices, the altar which sanctifies the gift: No good, how splendid soever in the sight of man, being acceptable to God 'till it be thus consecrated, and has this seal of the sanctuary upon it. This is a virtue truly divine, as well in its original as its end; for as it comes from heaven, so it tends thither also, and thither raises its votaries. This is it which sublimates and spiritualizes humanity, refines it from all the dregs of mortality, and so wings our earthly lumpish nature, that we can soar aloft to the region of spirits, and by its raptures make some essay of that state of separation even while we are linkt to the body. This is it which combines us so with God, that we have the same interests, the same choices; nay, it does in a sort communicate and interchange properties with him. The all-powerful

powerful God seems impotent, and unable to resist its influence, while it invests us feeble wretches in a kind of omnipotence, by engaging him for us who can do all things.

Piety may be considered in a larger or more limited sense. In the former, it is as wide as the whole scheme of duty, not confined to any one act; but extended to all the commands of God. For as the animal spirit diffuses itself into all the most distant members of the body; so this more vital principle has as universal influence on the mind, stamps that with such an admiration and reverence of God, such a love and complacency in him, that every act is at least habitually designed to obey and glorify him.

Piety, in the more limited sense, is taken for our immediate intercourse with God in things purely divine, as adorations, prayers, ejaculations, and all pantings and breathings of the soul after him: In which notion it is more particularly called devotion. And this is comprehended in the other, as a part in the whole, nay indeed as an effect in its cause; for where piety has not first formed and modelled the soul, there can be no true devotion. External forms of it there may be, but that is but ceremony and pageantry, the most submissive prostrations are there but like Dagon before the ark, the fall of a lifeless trunk; the most elevated eyes but a kind of convulsive motion, and the most rigid mortifications but like the lancements and cuttings of Baal's priests. Of this the very heathens had some notion, and therefore in their worship had many preparatory ceremonies of lustration and purifying, as being conscious of the incongruity, that unholy persons should be admitted to sacred things.

Accordingly Socrates has excellently defined the best way of worshipping God to be the doing what he commands. Indeed without this our devotion is mere stratagem and design; we invoke God as we use to cajole men, only to serve a present turn. And in such disingenuous addresses it is easy to read the event, or if we cannot, Solomon

lomon will instruct us, "The prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord."

As piety is the ladies greatest ornament and advantage, so have they somewhat more of predisposition towards it in their native temper. God's laws, which are the rule of piety, have this common with mens, that they are enforced upon us by the proposals both of punishments and rewards; by that means engaging two of our most sensible passions, fear and love; and the female sex being eminent for the pungency of both these, they are consequently the better prepared for the impressions of religion.

This is so much acknowledged, that our masculine Atheists make an ill use of it, and are willing* to think that religion owes its force only to the impotence of the subjects which it works upon, and that it is only an imposition on the easy credulity of women; in which tho' they sufficiently shew their contempt of piety, yet they unawares give greater honour to that sex than they intend, while they confess it more capable of a likeness to the supreme goodness, and of the renewal of God's image, (for to that all piety is designed) than their own. Wherefore women have so little reason to be ashamed, that they ought to glory in the concession, and gratefully to celebrate the goodness of God to them; who as he brings light out of darkness, so converts their natural infirmities into a means of spiritual strength; makes the impotences and defects of their nature subservient to the operation of grace, and by consecrating their very passions, makes even those Gibeonites serviceable to the tabernacle. But then it is to be remembered, that the greater is their obligation to comply with this design of God's, to let their passions run in the channel he has cut for them; so to confine their fear and love to spiritual objects, that they make no inordinate eruptions to any thing else, but in all their estimations of things dreadful, or desirable, to give still the just deference to that which is eternal.

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And as women in general have this advantage towards piety, and obligation to it, so particularly those of quality, who we may suppose to have generally a more early institution and instruction in it than those of a meaner rank. They have besides more opportunities afterwards of being built up in the knowledge of their duty, and by the help of an ingenious education, clearer apprehensions to discern it; and when they do so, have greater obligations to perform it, both in respect of God, of others, and themselves.

In respect of God they have the greatest tie of gratitude, not only for the common mercies which they partake with the rest of womankind, but for these peculiar, by which they are differenced from others; of which, if they want just value, let them ask themselves how willing they would be to part with them. How she who has fed delicately, would like to be desolate in the street, or she that has been brought up in scarlet, to embrace the dunghill. And according to the aversion they find to such a change, let them estimate their present enjoyments, and the thankfulness it exacts.

In regard of others, their piety backed with their secular advantages, may be of a more extensive benefit; they have many opportunities of doing good by their influence on others; or if no way else, yet the splendor of their example, will, by the eminency of their conditions, shine as a light on some high tower, more conspicuously, and guide many into the same path of virtue. It is certainly no small obligation which lies on them in this respect; for God, who does nothing without an end worthy of his wisdom, can never be thought to have selected some persons as the objects of his bounty, merely that they may swell and glut themselves with sensual pleasures. No, doubtless, he that is the great matter of the universe, disposes all things for common benefit; and therefore if he has placed some in a higher orb than others, it is that they may have an auspicious influence on those below them. And if they
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fail in this, they are no longer stars, but comets, things of ominous and unlucky abode to all about them.

They have, in respect to themselves, all obligations to piety: It is evident they do not more out-number their inferiors in any thing, than in the opportunities and solicitations to sin. Wealth and honour have many snares, and, which is worse, do often dispose the mind to such a heedless security, that it takes no care to avoid them: and as in the body, the diseases of repletion are far more numerous than those of emptiness, so the mind is oftner vitiated by affluence and prosperity, than by indigence and adversity. It becomes therefore those who are so surrounded with enemies, to fortify themselves, and that they can no way do but by a sincere piety, that "whole armour of God" which St. Paul describes, "by which alone they may repel all the darts of temptations." They may not only ward the blow, but wrest the weapon out of Satan's hands. Here he urges them to the opportunities, the impunity which their wealth and greatness give them to be bad: They may retort his argument, and by a wholsomer inference collect thence their great obligation to be good, not only upon the score of gratitude, though that were enough to an ingenuous soul, but of interest also, in respect of that account they must finally give. For though God be not an unjust exactor, to reap where he has not sowed, yet he is not so negligently profuse, as to do that which no prudent man will do, scatter his goods promiscuously, without taking notice where they fall: But as he dispenses all things by a particular providence, so he does it to a particular end, and will exact as particular an account how that end has been complied with.

It is a smart exprobration of God's to Israel, that she had sacrilegiously employed his "silver and gold, his flower and honey, which he had given her, in the service of her idols." By which, as we may see, he takes notice how we dispose of our temporal possessions, so
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it shews us how the indictment will proceed against all those who so pervert their use. With what confusion must they appear at the great audit, who can give no other account of their receipts but that they consumed them upon their lusts, waged war against God with his own treasure, and have been as well thieves as rebels? What a Luciferian fall will they have from their honours, who have endeavoured to undermine God's? Who thought themselves too great to pay him homage, and by their profane and vicious example induced a contempt of him? In short, what a retaliation of invasions will there then be? Those that have turned his grace into wantonness, converted his bounty into the fuel of their pride and luxury, shall then have their glory turned into shame, their riots and excesses into the want of a drop of water, and shall retain nothing of their greatness but the guilt, the grating remembrance of having abused those temporal blessings, which if well managed might have received them into everlasting habitations of joy. How necessary then is it, for all who have received so much upon account, to be often reflecting on it, examining what charges the great owner has imposed on so ample an income? What he requires of them for whom he has done so much? And this is particularly the business of piety, which in all the before-mentioned respects is, as the usefullest, so the noblest accomplishment of greatness.

Such has it been accounted, till this profane age of ours, which has removed all the boundaries of the former, reversed even the instincts of nature, and will not leave us so much of religion as the very worst of heathens had. For how erroneous soever they were in the choice of their deities, they always honoured and revered those they chose, committing most of their enormities in obedience, not in affront to them. They did not assign them votaries, as Jeroboam did, of the meanest of the people, but thought themselves dignified by their service,
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and esteemed it an infamy not to be pious. But alas! now-a-days we make other estimates; religion is so abject, so contemptible a thing, as is thought fit to influence none that are great either in parts or quality. And therefore though too many are willing to appropriate it to women upon the first account, as "the gospel is the foolishness of preaching;" yet they make exceptions upon the latter, and are not willing to extend it any of the nobler proselytes even of that sex.

I doubt not there are many lectures read to such, to fortify them against all impressions of piety, to raze out the common notion of a God; and in order to that, depose his vicegerent within them, discard their conscience, that unmannerly inmate, which is still speaking what they have no mind to hear, and will be apt sometimes to question their grand principle, and tell them they have souls. And truly it is no wonder if the abettors of Atheism take this course; for since they have no solid foundation of truth or reason, it is but necessary they support their party by authority, the countenance and applause of great persons; and God knows they have too much succeeded in the design. But in the mean time, what security do they give for the truth of their pretensions? We know it is still required of those, that will practise upon other peoples concerns, that they put in caution to secure the owner from damage. But alas! what gage can they give for a soul? Who can contrive a form of indemnity, where that is the thing hazarded?

It is easy indeed for one of these, the devil's apostles, to tell a lady she has nothing to do but to indulge to her pleasure; that it is the extreme folly to be frightened from a present enjoyment by a fear of I know not what future smart; that God, and sin, and hell, are but names, certain bugbears, conjured up by divines, to work upon her fear, and abuse her credulity.

This, and much more of this kind, may be said, and I doubt not often is; but all this while the question is begged,

begged, and a strong affirmation must pass for proof; for I defy all the doctors of Atheism to make any demonstration of their tenet; and yet, though they pretend to no demonstration themselves, religion must be condemned merely for the want of it, that is, for not making spiritual things liable to sense, for distinguishing between belief and science, which is indeed for doing the most reasonable thing in the world; remitting every object to the trial of its proper faculty: And they who suspect upon that account, may by the same kind of reasoning wrangle us out of all our senses, may persuade us that we hear nothing because the eye discerns not sounds, that we taste not because the ear understands not guils and savours, and so on to the rest.

And yet this is the bottom of those arguments which the great pretenders to reason make against religion, and in the mean time have so little ingenuity as to exclaim on the light credulity of fools and women, that embrace the dictates of faith, while at the same instant, they exact a more implicit assent to their negative articles, than to religion. A strange magisterial confidence, so to impose on this age what is so universally contradictory to all former, and to the common verdict of mankind! For it is observable thro' all the successions of men, that there was never any society, any collective body of Atheists. A single one perhaps might here and there be found, as we sometimes see monsters and unshapen births; but for the generality they had always such instincts of a deity, that they never thought they run far enough from Atheism, but rather chose to multiply their gods, to have too many than none at all. They were even apt to descend to the adoration of things below themselves, rather than to renounce the power above them. By which we may see, that the notion of a God is the most indelible character of natural reason; and therefore whatever pretence our Atheists make to ratiocination and deep discourse, it is none of that primitive fundamental reason, coetaneous with our humanity, but is indeed a rea-
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son fit only for those who own themselves like the beasts that perish.

Admit we could be more bountiful to them, and allow their opinion an equal probability with our faith, yet even this could never justify any body in point of prudence that should adhere to them. Common discretion teaches us, that where two propositions have an equal appearance of truth, there is no rational inducement to prefer one before the other, until we have examined the consequences, and find something in the one which may overpoise and outweigh the contrary. Now in all things that concern practice, there are no motives so considerable either to invite or avert, as advantage or danger.

Let us apply them to the present case, and examine the pretension of the Atheist and the Christian, in both respects. But first we are to remember that both advantage and danger are to be viewed under a double notion, either as present or as future; the former is the Atheist's most proper subject, and indeed all he can pertinently speak to, who professes himself a man of this world. Here he will tell us, that the disbelief of God and another life, is the great enfranchiser of mankind, sets us at liberty from that thralldom, those bonds with which our superstitious fears have followed us; that it supersedes all those nice and perplexing enquiries of lawful and unlawful, and reduces all our inquisitions only to this one, How we shall most please ourselves? The glutton need not put a knife to his throat, but is only to put an edge upon his palate. The drunkard need not refrain his cups, but only take care that they be filled with the most delicious liquor. The wanton need not pull out his eye, but only contrive to possess what that tempts him to desire. And, in a word, none of our appetites need be restrained, but satisfied. This uncontrouled licentiousness, this brutish liberty, is that chief good, that supreme happiness which they propose to themselves, and to which they invite others.

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On the other side, the Christian is not without his claim to a present advantage, though of a far differing nature. He is not so propolterous, as to think it a preferment to sink below his kind, to aspire to an assimilation with mere animals, which is the utmost the former amounts to; but he proposes to himself the satisfaction of a man; those delights which may entertain his reason not his sense, which consists in the rectitude of a well-informed mind. His religion is the perfected scheme of morality, and makes him a philosopher without the help of the schools. It teaches him the art of subduing his appetites, calming his passion, and in a word, making him Lord of himself, giving him by that, all the pleasures which result from such a sovereignty. Nor is he totally void even of the pleasures of sense, which in many instances are greater to him, than to those who most court them. Temperance cooks his coarsest diet to a greater gust than all their studied mixtures. Chastity makes one lawful embrace more grateful to him, than all the nauseating variety of their unbounded lusts: And contentment swells his mite into a talent; makes him richer than the Indies would do, if he desired beyond them. Nor is it a contemptible benefit, that his moderation gives him an immunity from those sensitive pains, which oft bring up the rear of inordinate sensual pleasures. Thus, his condition, even in the worst light, is not so deplorable as it is represented.

But if it were, he has pleasure that would infinitely overwhelm that smart, and that not only in his reason, but in his more sublime diviner part. Such irradiations from above, such anticipations of his future bliss, such acquiescence in a calm and serene conscience, as is very cheaply bought with all he can suffer here. I know the profane laugh at these things as chimeras, and the illusions of a prepossessed fancy; and truly if they were so, they might come in balance with many of their pleasures, which are as much owing to opinion and imagination: But if we consider, what support they have

have given under the heaviest pressures; how they enabled the primitive martyrs, not only to suffer, but even to court all that is formidable to human nature; we cannot think that a mere fantastic imaginary joy, could deceive the sense of such real, such acute torments. And though in this great declination of zeal, there be perhaps few that can pretend to those higher degrees of spiritual raptures, yet certainly were the votes of all devoted people collected, they would all concur in this testimony, that even in the common offices of piety, the ordinary discharge of a good conscience, there is infinitely greater complacence, a higher gush and relish, than in all the pleasures of sense. But of this, the most irrefragable witnesses are those, who from great voluptuaries have turned devotees; and I dare appeal to their experience, whether of the two states is the most pleasant. I wish those, who will not believe this on others words, would themselves make the trial; and till they do so, they are notoriously unjust to pronounce that a fiction, of whose reality they refuse to make proof.

By what has been said, such estimate may be made, which bids fairest, the Atheist or Christian, as to present temporal felicity. But alas! what an alloy, what a damp is it to felicity, to say it is temporal? Yet we may give it a term below that, and say it is momentary. For since our life is so, nothing that depends on that can be otherwise; and yet in this shallow bottom the irreligious embark their all. For as to all future advantage, it is their principle to disclaim it; they discern no reward for blameless souls. In this particular, the Christian does not compare with, but triumph over them. He knows that "if his earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, he hath a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." That when he parts with his life, he does not resign his happiness, but shall receive it infinitely improved, both in degree and duration. And now certainly it is visible enough which opinion proposes

proposes the fairer hopes, and consequently which, supposing but an equal probability, is the most inviting.

But some spirits there are so ignoble, that the most glorious prize cannot animate them; that, like a swine, the muscles of whose eyes, they say, permit him not to look upwards, are not concerned in all the felicities above, but would, at a venture, resign their share in those, so they may securely enjoy their husk and draff. But yet even those who are incapable of the more generous sentiments, may be apt enough to the more servile; and danger may fright, though glory cannot allure them. It concerns such, therefore, to compare the mischiefs which each opinion threatens to their opposites, and from thence make an estimate which is safest to be chosen. And here let the atheist himself cast up the account, of the dangers consequent to Christianity, and it can all amount but to this, the deprivation, or rather moderation, of some present sensual pleasures, or the incurring of some present sensitive pains; the former in the daily exercise of temperance and mortification; the latter more rarely, and oftener in purpose than act, the suffering for righteousness sake. And both these the Christian balances, nay, outweighs, by two more important present hazards on the other side. To the former, he opposes the danger of being enslaved to the brutish part of a man's self; a thing so deplorable in the judgment of humanity, that all writers of ethics have unanimously declared, no servility to be so sordid and intolerable, as that of the vicious man to his passions and lusts. To the latter, he confronts the mischief of being a slave to every man else: for such he certainly is, whom the fear of suffering can baffle out of any thing he thinks just and honest. For if all the men in the world could successively have the power to afflict him, they would have also to command and rule him: And what can be more abject, more below the dignity of human nature, than to have a spirit always prepared for such a servitude? Besides, even the utmost suffering which Christianity

can at any time require, is outvied daily by the effects of luxury and rage; and for one that has opportunity to be a martyr for his God, thousands become so to their vices.

If from the present we look forward to future dangers, the atheist must here be perfectly silent. He cannot say, that the Christian, after this life, shall be in any worse estate than himself, since he concludes they shall both be the same nothing; but the Christian threatens him with a more dismal state: he allows him indeed a being, and an eternal one; but it is only such, as qualifies him for a misery as eternal. The worm that never dies, the fire unquenchable, where all the excesses of his short pleasures shall be revenged with more excessive endless torments. His senses, which were here the only organs of his felicity, shall then be, though not the only, the very sensible mediums of his wretchedness; and that conscience, which he here suspended from its office, shall then take out its arrears, and return all its stifled admonitions, in perpetual horrors and desperate upbraidings.

To conclude; The result of all is, that the transitory pleasures of the atheist are overpoised, even by the present satisfactions of the pious. And the eternity of unbounded unconceivable joys he expects hereafter, comes in over and above, having nothing on the other side that offers at the competition with it. And at the very same rate of proportion, we have seen the dangers also are; so that we can easily compute the utmost mischief our Christianity can do to us if it should be false; but the damage of the other is inestimable, both for the penalty of loss and sense. I may now appeal to common prudence, to judge of the vast inequality, and to pronounce, that sure there had need be some great evidence of truth on the atheist's side, to preponderate all these disadvantages. Indeed, nothing much below a demonstration can justify the choice of so dangerous principles: I am sure an equal probability can never do it,

it, where the danger is so unequal; and were the veriest atheist consulted in a secular case of the like circumstances, would certainly pronounce him a madman that should make such an election. How desperate a frenzy then is it, to do it without so much as that equal probability, or indeed any probability at all? And yet this madness sets up for the monopoly, not of wit only, but reason too, and by confidence and clamour seeks to run down those arguments it can never confute.

My present business being to recommend piety, I can no way do that so effectually, as by shewing its consonancy to right reason, especially considering the busy Industry now used to represent it under another form; and to alienate from it those very persons whose greatness may give it any lustre or repute in the world. Of which sort I suppose there are few more frequently attacked than women of quality, who converse among those that call themselves the wits of the age.

It is to no purpose to enquire at what time, and by what examples, this flood of impiety broke in upon us, unless we did more ourselves to get clear of it, and ceased at least to refine on the vices which are complained of. The air is still infectious, and we still want antidotes to defend ourselves from the infection.

One cannot help advising the great especially of the sex we more particularly address to, to have a care how they combine with seducers against themselves; but if they have been so unhappy as to lend an ear to infidelity, yet at least not to give up both to be forced into a slavish submission to its dictates; but hear what may be offered on the side of faith. Sure it is but a low composition for God thus to divide with Satan; yet it is that of which his emissaries are so jealous, that it is one of their grand maxims, that none who professes divinity is to be advised with; and therefore by all arts they are to be rendered either ridiculous or suspected. To which methinks may be applied the fable, which Demosthenes once recited to the Athenians, when Alexander demanded

of them to deliver up their orators; of the wolves and the sheep, their coming to a treaty. The first article of the wolves was, That the sheep should give up their mastiffs which guarded them. The resemblance is too obvious to need a minute application.

But this is manifestly to reverse all former rules; and to trust a man rather in any faculty than in his own, and would never have prevailed in any thing, but where the soul is concerned; that poor despicable thing, whereon alone we think fit to make experiments. It is sure that if any should dispute their title to an earthly possession, they would not so tamely resign it, nor would trust their own selves in its defence, but would consult their ablest lawyers, and by them sift out every circumstance that might establish their claim. Why should they then suffer themselves to be talked out of an heavenly inheritance, without so much as once proposing their doubts to those whose study and profession it is to resolve them? But as in all other ill-, so in this, prevention is better than cure; and therefore to those that are yet untainted, the securest course will be, to stop both ears against all profane insinuations; and to use those who tempt them to be disloyal to their God, that spiritual adultery, as they should do those that solicit them to be carnal, not so much as to enter parley, but with the greatest indignation detest and reject them. It is the saying of the wise man, that "an angry countenance driveth away a back-biting tongue:" And certainly, would great persons look severely on such defamers of religion, they would give some check to that impudence of profaneness, which has given it such a vogue in the world.

And thus much it is sure their duty to do, if they own any relation to that God who is so dishonoured. They would think it a very disingenuous thing to sit by, and hear a friend or benefactor reviled, and express no displeasure. Is God then so friendless among them, that only his traducers and blasphemers can be patiently heard? Among the Jews, at the hearing of any blasphemy,

phery, they rent their clothes, as we have elsewhere observed; but I fear we have some of our nice dames that would be much more concerned at a rip in their garment, than at the rending and violating God's sacred Name; that could more patiently behold the total subversion of religion, than the disorder or misplacing of a lock or a ribband. But it is to be hoped there are not many so impious, and those that are not, will surely think themselves obliged, with all their power, to discountenance all the factors of irreligion; whether they be the solemn sedater sort that would argue, or the jollier that would rally them out of their faith.

But when they have thus provided against the assaults of others, and secured the speculative part of religion; they have only established a judicatory against themselves, stored up matter of conviction and accusation, if they answer it not in the practice. It behoves them therefore seriously to weigh the obligations they have to piety in the general notion of it, as it comprehends all the duties of a Christian life; of which I know not where to find a better summary than Saint James has drawn up, "Pure religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world"

Besides this general, there is, as I said already, another more restrained notion of piety, as it relates to our more immediate intercourse with God in divine ordinances and worship. In which respect it commonly passes under the name of devotion; and thus considered, it has a great propriety to the female sex. For devotion is a tender plant, that will scarce root in stiff or rocky ground, but requires a supple gentle soil, and therefore the feminine softness and pliability are very apt and proper for it; and accordingly there have been very eminent growths of it in that sex. I need not heap up examples of former ages, but rather persuade this to leave some at least to the following; and the more considerable the persons are, the more conspicu-

ous will be the example, which seems the more to adapt it to those I now speak to. Devotion in a cloister is as recluse as the votary : A light rather under a bushel than on a candlestick ; and, in an obscure cottage, it is either not observed, or else thought to be but the effect of destitution and secular wants, a reserve rather than a choice ; but when those who are in the eye of the world the most eminent actors on the theatre of human life shall choose the Part of a saint ; when those who want none of the divertisements or blandishments of earth shall have their conversation in heaven ; this recommends it to the spectators as the true and greatest object of human choice ; since it is chosen by those who know the utmost pretence of all its competitors.

Nor is devotion only more excellent in them, in regard of its effects, but it is also more necessary in respect of their obligation. Devotion is an abstraction from the world ; and therefore cannot, in any eminent degrees, be practised by those whose necessities or business do much entangle them in it. From such, a far less proportion will be accepted, than from those whose plenty and ease give them no other want but that of employment. And certainly, if there be any of whom that can be truly said, women of quality are the persons ; for they, in this respect, exceed even men of the like rank. Men are often engaged in public employments, and must lend most of their time to the use of others ; or, however, all have the care of their own private affairs, the management of their fortunes, to employ them. But of women, the utmost that is ordinarily required, is but a little easy inspection within their own walls, the oversight of a few children and servants. And even from this how many are by their condition of life exempted, and how many more do by their niceness and delicacy exempt themselves ? And surely so perfect a vacancy is neither happy nor safe ; wherefore God, who projects we should be both, never designed it for any of mankind ; but where
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he gives so much liberty from secular, he expects a greater diligence in spiritual employments.

And indeed it is an amazing thing to see, that any, into whom he has breathed the breath of life, on whom he has stamped the image of his own eternity, can think those immortal souls were given them, only to serve the mean and abject uses of their corruptible bodies; for which the soul of the dullest animal would have done as well: That eating and drinking, sleep and recreations, which are only useful to the supporting us in this world, are the only things for which we were sent hither. And yet if we may measure their opinions by their practice, this seems to be the persuasion of many of our female gentry, who look upon it as a degrading, a kind of attainder of their blood, to do any thing but please their senses: An error sure of the most pernicious consequence imaginable. We know a lady of pleasure is, in one sense, a very scandalous epithet; and truly it is no very laudable one in the other. She whose sole universal aim is pleasure, will not think herself much out of her road in the pursuit of any particular; and she that thinks she lives for no other purpose, will so often be at a loss for innocent pleasure, that she is almost under a necessity to call in the nocent, to serve the very end as she proposes of her being. But indeed, were they sure to confine themselves to such as are harmless in their kind, yet the excess of them renders them sinful, and the doting pursuit denominates them "lovers of pleasure more than "lovers of God;" a character so black, that the Apostle completes his catalogue of the worst vices of the worst times with it. And consequently it agrees so exactly with the loose degenerate age into which we are fallen, that we ought to look upon it as a matter of the highest concern, to endeavour after a reformation, and thereby prevent the falling down of the heaviest judgments on our heads. The contempt of religion is grown to such a height, that hardly the appearance

of morality and decency remains : Ladies of quality looking upon it as a part of their very liberal breeding, to shew that their behaviour, in all things, depends entirely on their humour, and that they are incapable of all restraint. Do such as these consider, that it is the goodness of God which has designed a rescue for those whose condition exposes them to such dangers, by exacting a liberal expence of time in the devotion, to divert them from lavishing both it and their souls together? Neither does he by this defeat their aim of a pleasant life, but rather assist it : For, whereas sensual delights are vagrant, and must be chased through a hundred turnings and wild mazes ; the spiritual are fixed, and one may always know where to find them. How often are the voluptuous in pain to know which pleasure to choose? Like a surfeited stomach, the greater variety is set before it, the more it nauseates all. What difficulties has a lady many times to resolve, whether an afternoon shall be spent at the court or the theatre? whether in dancing or at cards? in giving or receiving visits? as not knowing which will best please her. But she that knows the delight of devotion, knows withal that there is no other fit to come into competition with it, and so is not distracted in her choice, nor need go farther than her closet for the most agreeable entertainment. This, I know, will sound a little incredible, to those that take a closet to have no other use than to be a conservatory of toys and trifles, that aspire to no pleasure there above that of children, the playing with the pictures and puppets that adorn it. Nor indeed do I pretend that such shall find those satisfactions I speak of. Those whose errand is to Beelzebub, the god of flies, must not expect to be treated by the God of Israel. An ingenuous man will scorn to obtrude himself on those who desire not his company ; and God certainly will not make himself more cheap. Those that will meet him in their closets, must come with that design, resort thither as to an oratory, and must also come frequently too. Spiritual

tual joys know not the way to a place where they are not often invited; and as men seek for each other, not in places where they seldom or never come, but where they daily frequent; so, God contrives not to meet us in that place, where we appear rarely and accidentally, but where we usually resort.

There are so many printed directories, for public and private worship, that I need only observe here the order and connexion of these two, that they are neither to be severed, nor yet to be ranged preposterously. The private must not juggle out the public; for God expects his solemn homage: and their huddling it up in private, as it may give men ground to suspect they pay none at all, so neither God nor man can collect any thing better from it, than that they are ashamed of the Deity they pretend to serve. On the other side, the public must as little swallow up the private; and where it does, there must be just doubt of its sincerity. Many attractions there may be to church, besides that of piety; and indeed, where that is really the motive, it teaches so much reverence to that awful Presence they are to approach, as not to come without some preparation. What solicitude, what critical niceness, will a lady have for her dress, when she is to appear at a solemn meeting at court? And shall she take no care, how sordidly, how undecently she appears, when the King of kings gives audience? Shall many hours, days, nay, perhaps weeks, be taken up in contriving for the one, and shall there never be a minute allotted for the other? This were sure very unequal; and yet this is the case, where the devotion of the closet does not prepare for that of the church. If the mind be not first tuned there, it will be very ill qualified for that harmony of souls, which is the only thing God regards in our public offices. But indeed, private devotion is not only a needful preparative to that sacred commerce, but to our cure. The world is only a larger sort of a pesthouse: In every corner of it we meet with infectious airs, and those that converse in it

had need of this antidote. How many temptations does every place, every hour, every interview, present, to the shocking even of that moral integrity, which a sober heathen would judge fit to preserve, much more of that strict piety our Christianity exacts.

There is another motive to this private and constant exercise of devotion, which should weigh more than all others, though every motive has of itself weight sufficient to incline a just mind to the performance of it, and that is the consideration that God is present in all places, that he sees every action, hears all discourses, and understands every thought : He is wholly in every place, but included in none ; not bound with cords, except those of love ; not divided into parts, not changeable into several shapes, filling heaven and earth with his present power, and never-absent nature. This sure is enough to excite us to be frequent and fervent in our private devotions, that our whole lives may be sanctified, and made acceptable to that most awful Presence in which we always stand. We may always imagine God to be as the air and the sea, and we all inclosed in his circle, wrapped up in the lap of his infinite nature ; or as infants in the wombs of their pregnant mothers : and we can no more be removed from the presence of God than from our being.

The presence of God is understood by us in several manners, and to several purposes.

God is present by his essence, which, because it is infinite, cannot be contained within the limits of any place ; and because he is of an essential purity, and spiritual nature, he cannot be undervalued by being supposed present in the places of unnatural uncleanness. As the sun reflexing upon the mud of strands and shores, is unpolluted in his beams, so is God not dishonoured when we suppose him in every one of his creatures, and in every part of every one of them ; being still as unmixed with any unhandsome adherence, as the soul is in the bowels of the body.

God

God is every where present by his power; he rolls the orbs of heaven with his hand; he fixes the earth with his foot; he guides all the creatures with his eye, and refreshes them with his influence; he makes the powers of hell to shake with his terrors, binds the devils with his word, throws them out with his command, and sends the angels on embassies with his decrees. He hardens the joints of infants, and confirms the bones, when they are fashioned beneath secretly in the earth. He it is that assists at the numerous productions of fishes, and there is not one hollownes in the bottom of the sea, but he shews himself to be Lord of it, by sustaining the creatures that come to dwell in it. In the wilderness, the bittern and the stork, the elk and the bear, live upon his provisions, revere his power, and feel the force of his almightiness.

God is more specially present in some places, by the several and more special manifestations of himself, to extraordinary purposes. Thus his seat is in heaven: He sits there encircled with all the outward demonstrations of his glory, which he is pleased to shew to all the inhabitants of those his inward and secret courts. Thus they that "die in the Lord" may be properly said to be gone to God; with whom, though they were before, yet they now enter into the secret of his tabernacle, into the retinue and splendor of his glory. But this manner of the divine presence is reserved for the "elect people" of God, and for their portion in their country.

God is, by grace and benediction, specially present in holy places, and in the solemn assemblies of his servants. If holy people meet in grots and dens of the earth, when persecution or a publick necessity disturbs the public order, circumstances, and convenience, God fails not to come thither to them; but God is also by the same, or a greater reason, present there where they meet ordinarily, by order and publick authority. There God is present ordinarily; he will go out of his way to meet his saints, when themselves are forced out

of their way of order by a sad necessity; but else God's usual way is to be present in those places where his servants are appointed ordinarily to meet. However, his presence there signifies nothing more than a readiness to hear their prayers, to bless their persons, to accept their offices, and to like even the circumstance of orderly and public meeting.

God is especially present in the hearts of his people, by his holy spirit. Indeed the hearts of holy men and women are temples in the truth of things, and in type and shadow they are heaven itself. For God reigns in the hearts of his servants, there is his kingdom: The power of grace has subdued all his enemies, there is his power: They serve him night and day, and give him thanks and praise, that is his glory. The temple itself is the heart of man, Christ is the high priest, who from thence sends up the incense of prayers, joins them to his own intercession, and presents all together to his father. The Holy Ghost, by his dwelling there, has also consecrated it into a temple. God dwells in our hearts by faith, Christ by his spirit, and the Spirit by his purities. Thus we are also cabinets of the mysterious Trinity; and what is this short of heaven itself, but as infancy is short of manhood, and letters of words? The same state of life it is, but not the same age: It is heaven in a looking-glass, dark but yet true, representing the beauties of the soul, the grace of God, and the images of his eternal glory, by the reality of a special presence.

God is especially present in the consciences of all persons, good and bad, by way of testimony and judgment. He is there a remembrancer to call our actions to mind, a witness to bring them to judgment, and a judge to acquit or to condemn. Though this manner of presence is in this life imperfect, after the manner of this life, and we forget many of our actions, yet the greatest changes of our state of grace or sin, our most considerable actions, are always present, like capital letters to an
aged

aged and dim eye. At the day of judgment, God shall draw aside the cloud, manifest this manner of his presence more notoriously, and make it appear he was an observer of our very thoughts; that he only laid those things by, which because we covered them with dust and negligence, were not then discerned, but when we are risen from our dust and imperfection, they will all appear plain and legible.

Now the consideration of this great truth is of a very universal use, in the whole course of the life of a Christian: All the consequences and effects of it are universal. •He who remembers that God stands a witness and a judge, beholding every secret act of impiety, must be hardened in impudence if he be not much restrained in his temptation to sin. For the greatest part of sin is taken away, if a man has a witness of his conversation; and he is a great despiser of God, who sends a boy away when he is going to commit fornication, and yet will do it tho' he knows God is present, and cannot be sent off: As if the eye of a little boy was more awful than the all-seeing eye of God. He is to be feared in public, he is to be feared in private: If you go forth he spies you, if you go in he sees you, when you light the candle he observes you, when you put it out then also God marks you. Be sure that while you are in his sight you behave yourself as becomes so holy a presence: But if you will sin, retire yourself wisely, and go where God cannot see you, for no where else can you be safe. Certainly, if men would always actually consider, and really esteem this truth, that God is the great eye of the world, always watching over our actions, and hath an ever-open ear to hear all our words, and an unwearied arm ever lifted up to crush a sinner into ruin, it would be the readiest way in the world to make sin to cease from among the children of men, and for men to approach to the blessed estate of the saints in heaven, who cannot sin, for they always walk in the presence, and behold the face of God.

Say

Say with yourself, as David did, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, thou art there.” This thought, by being frequent, will beget an habitual dread and reverence towards God, and care in all your actions: For it is a great obligation and engagement to act unblameably, when we act before the judge who is infallible in his sentence, all-knowing in his information, severe in his anger, powerful in his providence, and intolerable in his wrath and indignation.

In the beginning of religious actions, make an act of adoration, that is, solemnly worship God, place yourself in God’s presence, and behold him with the eye of faith. Let your desires fix on him as the object of your worship, the reason of your hope, and the fountain of your blessings. For when you have placed yourself before him, and kneeled in his presence, it is most likely all the following parts of your devotion will be answerable to the wisdom of such an apprehension, and the glory of such a presence. Let every thing you see, represent to your spirit the presence, the excellency, and the power of God. Let your conversation with the creatures lead you to the creator; for so shall all your actions be done more frequently, with an actual eye to God’s presence, by your often seeing him in the glass of the creation. In the face of the sun you may see God’s beauty, in the fire you may feel his heat warming. In the water his gentleness to refresh you. He it is that comforts your spirits when you have taken cordials, and it is the dew of heaven that makes your field give you bread. This philosophy, which is obvious to every man’s experience, is a good advantage to our piety, and by this act of understanding, our wills are checked from violence and misdemeanor.

In your retirement make frequent colloquies, or short discourses between God and your own soul: “Seven times a day did *David* praise him, and in the night
“season

“season also did he think upon him while he was wa-
 “king.” Every act of complaint or thanksgiving,
 every act of rejoicing or of mourning, every petition,
 and every return of the heart in these intercourses, is a
 going to God, and appearing in his presence. This was
 long since by a spiritual person called, “A building to
 “God, a chapel in our hearts.” It reconciles charity
 and religion, the necessities of our calling, and the em-
 ployments of devotion: For thus, amidst the works for
 supplying the wants of human life, you may retire into
 your chapel, your heart, and converse with God by fre-
 quent addresses and prayers.

Represent and offer to God acts of love and fear,
 which are the proper effects of this apprehension, and
 the proper exercise of this consideration. For as God is
 every where present by his power, he calls for reverence
 and godly fear: As he is present to you in all your needs,
 and relieves them, he deserves your love. And since in
 every action of our lives, we find one or other of these
 apparent, and in most things see both, it is a proper and
 proportionate return, that to every such demonstration
 of God, we express ourselves sensible of it, by admiring
 his divine goodness, or trembling at his presence; ever
 obeying him because we love him, and never disobeying
 him because we fear to offend him.

Let us remember, that God is in us, and that we are in
 him. We are his workmanship, let us not deface it: We
 are in his presence, let us not pollute it by unholy and im-
 pure actions. God hath also wrought all our works in us.
 And because he rejoices in his own works, if we defile
 them, and make them unpleasant to him, we walk per-
 versely with God, and he will walk crookedly towards us.

God is in the bowels of your brother; refresh them
 when he needs it, and then you give your alms in the
 presence of God, and to God; who feels the relief
 which you provide for your brother.

God is in every place; suppose it therefore to be a
 church; and that decency of deportment, and piety of
 carriage, which you are taught by religion, or by custom,
 or

or by purity and public manner to use in churches, the same use in all places; with this difference only, that in churches let your deportment be religious, in external forms and circumstances also; but there and every where let it be religious, in abstaining from spiritual indecencies, and in readiness to do good actions; that it may not be said of you, as God once complained of his people, “Why hath my beloved done wickedness to my house?”

God is in every creature; be cruel towards none, neither abuse any by intemperance. Remember that the creatures, and every member of this our body, is one of the lesser cabinets and receptacles of God. They are such as God has blest with his presence, hallowed by his touch, and separated from unholy use, by making them to belong to his dwelling.

He walks as in the presence of God, that converses with him in frequent prayer and frequent communion, that runs to him in all his necessities, and asks counsel of him in all his doubtings, that opens all his wants to him, that weeps before him for his sins, that asks remedies and supports for his weakness, that hears him as a judge, and reverences him as a lord, obeys him as a father, and loves him as a patron.

This exercise of considering the divine presence is an excellent help to prayer, producing in us reverence and awfulness to the divine majesty of God, and actual devotion in our offices.

It also produces a confidence in God, and fearlessness of our enemies; patience in trouble, and hope of remedy; since God is so nigh in all our sad accidents; he is a disposer of the hearts of men, and even of things; he proportions out our trials, and supplies us with remedies; and where his rod strikes us, his staff supports us. To which we may add this, that God, who is always with us, is, especially by promise in tribulation, to turn the misery into a mercy, and that our greatest trouble may become our advantage, by entitling us to a new manner of the divine presence.

It

‘It is apt to produce joy and rejoicing in God, we being more apt to delight in the partners and witnesses of our conversation. Every degree of mutual abiding and conversing, being a relation and an endearment: We are of the same household with God: He is with us, in our natural actions to preserve us, in our recreations to restrain us, in our public actions to applaud or reprove us, in our private to observe us, in our sleep to watch by us, in our watchings to refresh us: And if we walk with God in all his ways, as he walks with us in all ours, we shall find perpetual reasons to enable us to keep that rule of his, “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice:” Which puts me in mind of a saying of an old religious person, “There is one way of overcoming our ghostly enemies, spiritual mirth, and a continual bearing of God in our minds.” This effectually resists the devil, and suffers us to receive no hurt from him.

This exercise is apt also to kindle holy desires of the enjoyment of God, because it produces joy when we do enjoy him; the same desires that a weak man has for a defender, the sick man for a physician, the poor for a patron, the child for his father, the bride for her bridegroom.

From the same fountain are apt to issue, humility of spirit, apprehensions of our great distance, and our great needs, our daily wants, and hourly supplies, and admiration of God’s unspeakable mercies. It is the cause of great modesty and decency in our actions; it helps recollection of mind, and restrains the scatterings and looseness of wandering thoughts; it establishes the heart in good purposes, and leads us on to perseverance; it gains purity and perfection, according to the saying of God to Abraham, “Walk before me and be perfect; with holy fear, and holy love,” and indeed every thing that pertains to a holy life. When we see ourselves placed in the eye of God, who sets us to work, and will reward us plentifully, to serve him with eye-service is not very pleasing, for he also sees the heart; and the want of this

Consideration

consideration was declared to be the cause why Israel sinned so grievously: "For they say, the Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not; therefore the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness." What a child would do in the eye of his father, and a pupil before his tutor, and a wife in the presence of her husband, and a servant in the sight of his master; let us always do the same; for "we are made a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men." We are always in the sight and presence of the all-seeing and almighty God, who is also to us a father and a guardian, a husband and a lord.

Though from what has been already said, persons of both sexes may form a very lively and edifying idea of religion, and especially Christianity; yet since there can never be too much of life and edification in such a subject, we shall carry our reflexion still farther, both in generals and particulars.

Religion, in a large sense, signifies the whole duty of man, comprehending in it justice, charity, and sobriety; because all these being commanded by God, they become a part of that honour and worship which we are bound to pay to him. It is, in a more restrained sense, taken for that part of duty, which particularly relates to God, in our worship and adoration of him; in confessing his excellencies, loving his person, admiring his goodness, believing his word, and doing all that which may, in a proper and direct manner, do him honour. It contains the duties of the first table only, and the internal actions of religion, in which the soul only is employed, and ministers to God, in the special actions of faith, hope, and charity.

Faith believes the revelations of God, hope expects his promises, and charity loves his excellencies and mercies. Faith gives our understanding to God, hope gives up all the passions and affections to heaven and heavenly things, and charity gives the will to the service of God. Faith is opposed to infidelity, hope to despair, and charity to enmity and hostility; and these
three

three sanctify the whole man; and make our duty to God, and obedience to his commandments, to be willing, reasonable, and delightful, and therefore to be intire, persevering, and universal.

The acts and offices of faith are, To believe every thing which God has revealed to us; and when once we are convinced that God has spoken it, to make no farther inquiry, but humbly to submit, ever remembering, that there are some things, which our understanding cannot fathom, nor search out their depth.

To believe nothing concerning God but what is honourable and excellent; as knowing that belief to be no honouring of God, which entertains of him any dishonourable thoughts. Faith is the parent of charity, and whatsoever faith entertains, must be apt to produce love to God. But he that believes God to be cruel or unmerciful, or to rejoice in the unavoidable damnation of the greatest part of mankind, or that he speaks one thing and privately means another, thinks evil thoughts concerning God, and such as for which we should hate a man, and therefore are great enemies of faith, and apt to destroy charity. Our faith concerning God, must be as himself has revealed and described his own excellencies; and in our discourses we must remove from him all imperfection, and attribute to him all excellency.

To give ourselves wholly up to Christ in heart and desire, to become disciples of his doctrine by choice besides conviction, being in the presence of God but as idiots, without any principles of our own to hinder the truth of God, but sucking in greedily all that God has taught us, believing it infinitely, and loving to believe it. For this is an act of love reflected upon faith, or an act of faith leaning upon love.

To believe all God's promises, and that whatsoever is promised in Scripture, shall on God's part be as surely performed, as if we had it in possession. This act makes us to rely upon God with the same confidence, as we did on our parents when we were children, when we
made

made no doubt, but whatsoever we needed we should have, if it were in their power.

To believe also the conditions of the promise, or that part of the revelation which concerns our duty. Many are apt to believe the article of remission of sins, but they believe it without the condition of repentance, or the fruits of a holy life; which is to believe the article otherwise than God intended it. For the covenant of the gospel is the great object of faith, and that supposes our duty to answer his grace; that God will be our God so long as we are his people. The other is not faith but flattery.

To profess publicly the doctrine of Jesus Christ, openly owning whatsoever he has revealed and commanded; not being ashamed of the word of God, or of any practices enjoined by it; and this without complying with any man's interest, not regarding favour, nor being moved with good words; not fearing disgrace, or loss, or inconvenience, or death itself.

To pray without doubting, without weariness, without faintness, entertaining no jealousies or suspicions of God, but being confident of God's hearing us, and of his returns to us, whatever the matter or the instance be; that if we do our duty, he will be gracious and merciful.

These are the acts of faith. The signs are,

An earnest and vehement prayer: For it is impossible we should heartily believe the things of God, and the glories of the gospel, and not most importunately desire them: For every thing is desired according to our belief of its excellency and possibility.

To do nothing for vain-glory, but wholly for the interests of religion.

To be content with God for our judge, for our patron, for our lord, for our friend; desiring God to be all in all to us, as we are in our understandings and affections wholly his.

To have all our thoughts and principal desires fixed upon the matters of truth, the things of heaven, For if a man were adopted heir to Cæsar, he would, if he believed it real and effective, be wholly at court in his father's eye. His desires would outrun his swiftest speed, and all his thoughts would spend themselves in creating ideas and little fantastick images of his future condition. Now God has made us heirs of his kingdom, and coheirs with Christ: If we believed this, we would think, and act, and study accordingly.

But he that rejoices in gain, whose heart dwells in the world, and is espoused to a fair estate; who is transported with a light momentary joy, is afflicted with losses, and amazed with temporal persecutions; who esteems disgrace or poverty, in a good cause, to be intolerable: This man either has no inheritance in heaven, or believes none. He believes not that he is adopted to be the son of God, the heir of eternal glory. "Shew me thy faith by thy works," says the apostle: Faith makes the merchant diligent and adventurous, and that makes him rich. It is told us by Christ, "he that forgives shall be forgiven." If we believe this, it is certain we shall forgive our enemies; for none of us all but need to be forgiven. No man can possibly despise or refuse such excellent glories, as are revealed to them that are servants of Christ; and yet we do nothing that is commanded us, as a condition to obtain them. No man could work a day's labour without faith; but because he believes he shall have his wages at the day's or week's end, if he does his duty. But he only believes, who does that thing, which other men in like cases do, when they do believe. He that believes money gotten with danger, is better than poverty with safety, will venture for it in unknown lands or seas; and so will he that believes it is better to get heaven with labour, than to go to hell with pleasure.

He that believes does not make haste, but waits patiently till the times of refreshment come, and dares trust God for

for the morrow. He is no more solicitous for the next year, than he is for that which is past. And it is certain that man wants faith, who dares be more confident of being supplied when he has money in his purse, than when he has it only in bills of exchange from God; or that relies more upon his own industry, than upon God's providence, when his own industry fails him. If you dare trust to God, when the case to human reason seems impossible, and trust to God then also out of choice, not because you have nothing else to trust to, but because he is the only support of a just conscience, then you give a good testimony of your faith.

True faith is confident, and will venture all the world upon the strength of its persuasion. Will you lay your life on it, your estate, your reputation, that the doctrine of Jesus Christ is true in every article? Then you have true faith: But he that fears men more than God, believes men more than he believes in God.

Faith, if it be true, living, and justifying, cannot be separated from a good life: It works miracles, makes a drunkard become sober, a lascivious person become chaste, a covetous man become liberal: "It overcomes the world, it works righteousness," and makes us diligent to do, and cheerfully to suffer, whatsoever God has placed in our way to heaven.

I shall proceed to consider the means and instruments to obtain faith. The first is an humble, willing and docible mind, a desire to be instructed in the way of God; for persuasion enters like a sun-beam gently, and without violence; open but the window and draw the curtain, and the sun of righteousness will enlighten your darkness.

Remove all prejudice, and love to every thing which may be contradicted by faith. "How can ye believe," said Christ, "that receive praise of one another?" An unchaste man cannot easily be brought to believe, that in chaste purity he shall ever see God. He that loves riches can hardly believe the doctrine of poverty, and
renunciation

renunciation of the world. Alms, martyrdom, and the doctrine of the cross, is folly to him that loves his ease and pleasures. He that has within him any principles contrary to the doctrines of faith, cannot easily become a disciple.

Prayer, which is instrumental in every thing, has a particular promise in this, "He that lacks wisdom let him ask it of God;" and "if you give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give his spirit to them that ask him?"

The consideration of the divine omnipotence, and infinite wisdom, and of our own ignorance, are great instruments of curing all doubting, and silencing the murmurs of infidelity.

Avoid all curiosity of enquiring into particulars, and circumstances of mysteries: For true faith is full of ingenuity and hearty simplicity, free from suspicion, wise and confident, trusting upon generals, without watching and prying into unnecessary or undiscernible particulars. No man carries his bed into his field to watch how his corn grows, but believes upon the general orders and providence of nature, and at harvest finds himself not deceived.

Be not busy to dispute the time of temptation, but rely upon the conclusion, and throw yourself upon God. Contend not with him but in prayer, and in the presence, and with the help, of a prudent and sober guide. Be sure to esteem all changes of faith, which offer themselves in the time of your greatest weakness, contrary to the persuasions of your best understanding, to be temptations, and reject them accordingly.

It is a prudent course, that in our health and best advantages, we lay up particular arguments and grounds of persuasion and confidence, to be brought forth and used in the great day of expence; and that especially in such things in which we use to be most tempted, in which we are least confident, which are
most

most necessary, and which commonly the devil uses to assault us withal in the days of our visitation.

The difference between faith and hope consists in this, that the objects of faith are all things revealed, good and bad, rewards and punishments, things past, present, and to come; things that concern us, and things that concern us not: But hope has for its object, things only that are good, and fit to be hoped for, and respecting ourselves; because these things are offered to us upon condition, of which we may so fail as we may change our will; therefore our certainty is less than the adherences of faith, which because faith relies upon one proposition, that is, the truth of the word of God, cannot be made uncertain in themselves; whereas the object of our hope may become uncertain to us, with respect to our attainment. For it is infallibly certain, that there is a heaven for all the godly, and for me among them all, if I do my duty. But that I shall enter into heaven is the object of my hope, not of my faith, and is so sure, as it is certain I shall persevere in the ways of God.

The acts of hope are, To rely upon God, with a firm expectation of his promises, always esteeming every promise of God as a magazine of all that grace and relief, which we can need in that instance for which the promise is made.

To esteem all the danger of an action, the possibilities of miscarriages, and every cross accident that can intervene, to be no defect on God's part, but either a mercy on his part, or a fault on ours. For then we shall be sure to trust in God, when we see him to be our confidence, and ourselves the cause of all mischances.

To rejoice in the midst of misfortune, or seeming sadness; knowing that this may work for good, if we be not wanting to ourselves. This is a direct act of hope, to look through the cloud for a beam of the light from God, which is called in scripture, "Rejoicing in
"tribu-

"bulation," when "the Lord of hope fills us with joy in believing."

To desire to pray, and to long for the great object of our hope, the mighty prize of our high calling, and to desire the other things of this life as they are promised, that is, so far as they are made necessary and useful to us, in order to God's glory, and the great end of souls. Hope and fasting are said to be the two wings of prayer: Fasting is but as the wing of a bird; but hope is like the wing of an angel, soaring up to heaven, and bearing our prayers to the throne of grace. Without hope it is impossible to pray; but hope makes our prayers reasonable, passionate, and religious: for it relies upon God's promise, on the experience of his providence. Prayer is always in proportion to our hope, zealous and affectionate.

Perseverance is the perfection of hope in its last act. So long as our hope continues, so long we go on in duty and diligence.

The rules to govern hope are these following:

Let your hope be moderate, proportioned to your state, person and condition, whether it be for gifts or grace, or temporal favours. It is an ambitious hope for persons, whose diligence exceeds not theirs that are least in the kingdom of heaven, to believe themselves as dear to God as the greatest saints; or that they shall have a throne equal with Saint Paul, or the blessed Virgin Mary. Hope that God will crown your endeavours with equal measures of that reward, which he indeed freely gives, but yet gives in proportion to your endeavours. Hope for good success according to, or not much beyond, the efficacy of the cause and the instrument. Let the husbandman hope for a good harvest, not for a rich kingdom, or a victorious army.

Let your hope be well grounded, relying upon just confidences; that is, upon God, according to his revelations and promises. For it is possible for a man to have a vain hope in God; and in matters of religion, it is

presumption to hope, that God's mercies will be poured forth upon lazy persons, that do nothing towards holy and strict walking, that trust and long for an event, besides and against all application of the means. Rely not in temporal things upon uncertain prophecies and astrology, not upon your own wit or industry, not upon gold and friends, not upon armies and princes. Trust not in physicians for health, who are but men, and cannot always cure themselves. Use all lawful means, but expect nothing from them above their natural or ordinary efficacy; and in the use of them expect a blessing from God. A hope that is easy and credulous, is an arm of flesh, and will miserably disappoint us at last.

Let your hope be without vanity, sober, grave, and silent, fixed in the heart, not born upon the lip; apt to support your spirits within, but not provoke envy abroad.

Let your hope be of things possible, safe, and useful. He who hopes for an opportunity of acting his revenge, or lust, or rapine, watches to do himself a mischief. All evils incident to ourselves, or brethren, are objects of our fear, not hope. And when we truly understand them, things useless and unsafe can no more be wished for, than things impossible can be obtained.

Let your hope be patient, without weariness of spirit, or hastiness in point of time. Make no limits or prescriptions to God, but let your prayers and endeavours go on still, with a constant attendance on the methods of divine Providence. The men of Bethulia resolved to wait upon God but five days longer; but deliverance staid seven days, and yet came at last. Take not every accident for an argument of despair; but go on still in hoping, and begin again to work, if any ill accident has interrupted you.

The means to cure despair, and to continue or increase in hope, are partly by consideration, partly by exercise.

Apply

Apply your mind to cure all the proper causes of despair, which are weakness of spirit, or violence of passion. He who covets greedily, is impatient of delay, and desperate in cross accidents. He who is little of heart, is also little of hope, and apt to be melancholy and suspicious.

Despise the things of the world, and be indifferent to all changes and events of Providence: And for the things of God, the promises are sure to be performed in kind. Where there is less variety of chance, there is less possibility of being disappointed. But he who creates to himself thousands of little hopes, uncertain in the promise, and fallacious in the event, depending upon ten thousand circumstances, as are all the things of this world, shall often fail in his expectations, and be apt to distrust Providence at last.

So long as your hopes are regular and reasonable in temporal affairs, such as are deliverances from enemies, escaping a storm or shipwreck, recovery from sickness, ability to pay your debts, and the like: Remember, there are some things ordinary and some things extraordinary to prevent despair. In ordinary, remember that the very hoping in God, is an endearment of him, and a means to obtain his blessing. "I will deliver him, because he hath put his trust in me." There are in God all those glorious attributes and excellencies, which in the nature of things can possibly create or confirm hope; he is strong, wise, true, loving: There cannot be added another capacity to create a confidence; for upon these premises we cannot fail of receiving what is fit for us. God has obliged himself, by promise, that we shall have the good of every thing we desire; for even losses and disappointments shall "work for the good of them that fear God." If we will trust the truth of God for performance of the generals, we may well trust his wisdom to choose for us the particulars: But the extraordinary ways of God are apt to supply the defect of all natural and human possibilities. God has in many instances given extra-

ordinary virtue to the second causes and instruments, he has given excellent spirit and vigour to the sufferers, arming them with strange courage, heroic fortitude, invincible resolution, and glorious patience. His providence produces strange things beyond common rules; he who led Israel through a sea, who made a rock pour forth waters, the heavens to give them bread and flesh, and whole armies to be destroyed with fantastic noises, can do what he pleases, and still retain the same affection for his people, and the same providence over mankind as ever. It is impossible for that man to despair, who remembers that his Helper is omnipotent, infinitely loving, and infinitely wise, choosing better for us than we can for ourselves. This in all ages and chances has supported the afflicted people of God, and carried them on dry ground through a Red sea. God invites and cherishes the hopes of men by all the variety of his providence.

If your case be brought to the last extremity, and you are even at the very brink of the grave, yet then despair not; at least, wait a little longer; and remember that whatsoever final accident takes away all hope from you, if you stay a little longer, and in the mean while bear it patiently, it will also take away all despair too; for when you enter into the regions of death, you rest from all your labours and your fears.

Let them who are tempted to despair of their salvation, consider how much Christ suffered to redeem us from sin and its eternal punishment. He who considers this, must needs believe, that the desires which God had to save us, were not less than infinite, and therefore not easily to be satisfied without effecting it.

Let no man despair of God's mercies to forgive him, unless he be sure that his sins be greater than God's mercies: if they be not, we have much reason to hope, that the stronger ingredients will prevail, so long as we are in the day and state of repentance, within the possibility and latitude of the covenant; and as long as any person can but reflect upon him with an oblique beam of comfort,

comfort, possibly the man may err in his judgment of circumstances, and therefore let him fear; but because it is not certain he is mistaken, let him not despair.

Consider, that though God knows all the events of men, and what their final condition shall be, who shall be saved, and who shall perish; yet he treats them as his own, calls them to be his own, offers fair conditions as to his own, gives them blessings, arguments of mercy, and instances of fear to deter them from death, and call them home to life; all which shews no cause of despair to them; therefore much less should any man despair for himself, since he was never able to read the scrolls of eternal predestination.

Remember that despair belongs only to passionate fools or villains, such as were Ahithophel and Judas; or else to devils and damned persons. And as the hope of salvation is a good disposition towards it, so is despair a certain consignment to eternal ruin. A man may be damned for despairing to be saved. Despair is the proper passion of damnation. God has placed truth and felicity in heaven, consideration and repentance upon earth, but misery and despair are the portion of hell.

Have always in mind the promises of God, and the remembrances, the experience, the former senses of the divine favours; that thence you may argue from times past to the present, and enlarge to the future and to greater blessings. For though the conjectures and expectations of hope are not like the conclusions of faith; yet they are a defence against the searchings of despair in temporal things, and an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, against the fluctuations of the spirit in matters of salvation. God has preserved me from many sins, may I argue with myself, and his mercies are infinite; I hope he will still preserve me from many more. I have sinned, and God smote me not; his mercies are still over the penitent: I hope he will deliver me from all the evils I have deserved. He has forgiven me many sins of

malice, and therefore surely he will pity my infirmities. God visited my heart, and changed it. He loves the work of his own hand; and such my heart is now become: I hope he will love this too. When I repented, he received me graciously; and therefore I hope, if I do my endeavour, he will totally forgive me. He helped my slow and weak beginnings; and therefore I hope he will lead me to perfection. When he had given me something first, then he gave more: I hope therefore he will keep me from falling, and give me the grace of perseverance. He has chosen me to be a disciple of Christ's institution; he has elected me to his kingdom of grace; and therefore I hope also to see his kingdom of glory. He died for me when I was his enemy; and therefore I hope he will save me, when he has reconciled me to himself, and is become my friend. "God has given us his Son; how shall he not with him give us all things else?"

Take you care only of your duty, of the means and proper instruments of your work, and leave the end to God. Lay that up with him, and he will take care of all that is intrusted with him; which being an act of confidence in God, is also a means of security to you.

By special acts of spiritual prudence and reasoning, secure the confident belief of the resurrection; and you cannot but hope for every thing else, which you may reasonably expect, or lawfully desire, upon the stock of the divine mercies and promises.

If despair seizes you in a particular temporal instance, let it not defile your soul with impure mixture, or blend with your spiritual considerations; but rather let it make you establish your soul in matters of religion, that by being thrown out of your earthly dwelling and confidence, you may retire into the strengths of grace, and hope the more strongly in that, by how much you are the more defeated in this, that despair of good fortune, or success, may become the necessary spur to all virtue.

Enough

Enough has been said of faith and hope: We come now to charity; or the love of God. Love is the greatest thing he can give us, and the greatest thing we can give to God; for God himself is love. Charity is the old, the new, and the great commandment. It is indeed all the commandments; for it is the "fulfilling of the law." It does the work of all other graces, without any instrument but its own immediate virtue. For as the love of sin makes a man sin against all his own reason, all the discourses of wisdom, all the advices of his friends, without temptation, and without opportunity, so does the love of God make a man chaste, without the laborious acts of fasting and exterior discipline, temperate in the midst of feasts, and active enough to chuse it without intermediate appetites. It reaches at glory through the very heart of grace, without any other aims but those of love. It is a grace that loves God for himself, and our neighbours for his sake. The consideration of God's goodness and bounty, the experience of those profitable and excellent emanations from him, may be, and most commonly are, the first motive of our love; but when we are once entered, and have tasted the goodness of God, we love the spring for its own excellency, passing from passion to reason, from thinking to adoring, from sense to spirit; from self-love to an union with God; this is the image, and little representation of heaven. It is beatitude in picture, or rather the infancy and beginnings of glory.

We need no incentives, by way of special enumeration, to move us to the love of God; for we cannot love any thing, for any excellence, real or imaginary, but that excellence is infinitely more eminent in God. There can but two things create love, perfection and usefulness; to which answer on our part, admiration and desire; both which are centred in love. For the entertainment of admiration, there is in God an infinite nature, immensity or vastness, without extension or limits, immutability, eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, holiness,

dominion, providence, bounty, mercy, justice, perfection. He is the original of all things, and the end also to which all things and all actions must be directed, and will at last arrive. The consideration of which may be heightened, if we consider our distances from all these glories. Our smallness and limited nature, our nothing, our inconstancy, our age like a span, our weakness and ignorance, our poverty, our inadvertency and inconsideration, our disabilities and disaffections to do good, our harsh natures and unmerciful inclinations, our universal iniquity, and our necessities and dependencies, not only on God originally and essentially, but even our need of the meanest of God's creatures, and our being obnoxious to the weakest and most contemptible. But for the entertainment of desire we may consider, that in him is a torrent of pleasure for the voluptuous: He is the fountain of honour for the ambitious, an inexhaustible treasure for the covetous. Our vicious hearts are in love with fantastic pleasures, and images of perfections, which are truly and really nowhere to be found but in God. Our virtues therefore have such proper objects, that it is but reasonable they should all turn into love: for certain it is, that this love will turn into virtue. As to the acts of love to God, obedience is the chief: "This is love, that we keep his commandments."

Love does all things which may please the beloved person: It is also sedulous and inquisitive in the instances of its expression.

Love gives away all things to advance the interest of the person beloved: It relieves all that he would have relieved, and spends itself in such real significations as it is enabled withal. He never loved God, that will quit any thing of his religion to save his money: Love is always liberal and communicative.

It suffers all things that are imposed by its beloved, or that can happen for his sake, or that intervene in his service, cheerfully, sweetly, willingly, expecting that
God

God should turn them into good, and instruments of felicity. Love is patient, and content with any thing.

Love also is impatient of any thing that may displease the beloved person, hating all sin as the enemy of its friend: for love contracts all the same relations, the same friendships, and the same hatreds. All affection to sin is perfectly inconsistent with the love of God. Love is not divided between God and God's enemies: We must love God with all our heart, give him a whole and undivided affection, having love for nothing else but such things as he allows, and which he commands or loves himself.

- Love endeavours for ever to be present, to converse with, to enjoy, to be united with its object; loves to be talking of him, reciting his praises, repeating his words, imitating his gestures, transcribing his copy in every thing: And every degree of union, and every degree of liking, is a degree of love, which can endure any thing but the absence, and the displeasure of the beloved. For we are not to use God and religion as men use perfumes, with which they are delighted when they have them, but can very well be without them. True charity is restless till it enjoys God in such instance in which it wants him. It is like hunger and thirst; it must be fed, or it cannot be answered. Nothing can supply the presence, or make recompence for the absence of God, or of the effects of his favour, and the light of his countenance.

True love, in all accidents, looks upon the person beloved, and observes his countenance, and how he approves or disapproves it; and accordingly looks sad or cheerful. He who loves God, is not displeased at those accidents which God chooses, nor murmurs at those changes which he meets in his family, nor envies at those gifts he bestows; but chooses as he likes, and is ruled by his judgment: Is perfectly of his persuasion, loving to learn where God is the Teacher, and being

content to be ignorant or silent, where he is not pleased to open himself.

Love is curious in little things, or circumstances, or measures, and little accidents, not allowing to itself any infirmity which it strives not to master, aiming at what it cannot reach, desiring to be of an angelical purity, of a perfect innocence, a scrupulous fervour, and fears every image of offence: Is as much afflicted at an idle word as some at an act of adultery, and will not allow itself so much anger as will disturb a child, nor endure the impurity of a dream. This is the curiosity and niceness of divine love; this is the fear of God, and is the daughter and production of love.

But because this passion is pure as the brightest and smoothest mirror, and therefore is apt to be sullied with every impure breath, we must be careful that our love to God be governed by these rules and measures.

That it be sweet, even, and full of tranquillity, having in it no violences of transports, but going on in a course of holy actions and duties, which are proportionable to our condition and present state; not to satisfy all the desire, but all the proportions and measures of our strength. A new beginner in religion has passionate and violent desires, but they must not be the measure of his actions. He must consider his strength, his late sickness and state of death, the proper temptation of his condition; and stand at first upon his defence; not go to storm a strong fort, or attack a potent enemy, or do heroic actions, fitter for giants in religion. Indiscreet violences, and untimely forwardness, are the rocks of religion, against which tender spirits often suffer shipwreck.

Let your love be prudent, and without illusion; let it express itself in such instances as God has chosen, or which we chuse ourselves, by proportion to his rules and measures. Love turns into doting when religion turns into superstition. No degree of love can be imprudent,

dént, but the expreffions may: We cannot love God too much, but we may proclaim it in indecent manners.

Let your love be firm, constant, and inseparable; not coming and returning like the tide, but descending like a never-failing river, ever running into the ocean of divine excellency, passing on in the channel of duty and constant obedience, and never ceasing to be what it is, till it comes to what it desires to be; being still a river till it be turned into sea and vastness, even the immensity of a blessed eternity.

Though the consideration of the divine excellencies and mercies be infinitely sufficient to produce in us love to God, yet that we may the better kindle and increase our love to him, we must cut off all earthly and sensual loves, for they pollute and unhallow the pure and spiritual love. Every degree of inordinate affection to the things of this world, and every act of love to a sin, is a perfect enemy to the love of God. And it is great shame to take any part of our affection from the eternal God, to bestow it upon a creature, in defiance of his creator; or to give it to the devil, our open enemy, in disparagement of him who is the fountain of all excellencies, and celestial amities.

Lay fetters and restraints upon the imaginative and fantastical part, because our fancy being an imperfect and lighter faculty, is usually pleased with entertainment of shadows; and because the things of the world fill it with such beauties, and fantastic imagery, it presents such objects as amiable to the affections, and elective powers. Persons of fancy, such as are women and children, have always the most violent loves. But then, if we be careful with what images we fill our fancies, we may the sooner rectify our love. To this purpose it is good that we transplant the instruments of fancy into religion; for which reason musick was brought into churches, together with ornaments, perfumes, comely garments, solemnities, and decent ceremonies, that the busy and less discerning

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fancy

fancy being bribed with its proper objects, may be instrumental to a more celestial and spiritual love.

Remove solicitude or worldly cares, and multitudes of secular businesses; for if these take up the intention and actual application of our thoughts, and meditations, they will also possess our passions; which, if they be filled with one object, though ignoble, cannot attend another, though more excellent. We always contract a friendship and relation with those with whom we converse. Our very country is dear to us for our being in it, and the neighbours of the same village, and those that buy and sell with us, have seized upon some portions of our love. Wherefore, if we dwell in the affairs of the world, we shall also grow in love with them; and all our love, or all our hatred, all our hopes, or all our fears, which the eternal God would graciously secure to himself, and esteem among his treasures and precious things, shall be spent upon trifles and vanities.

Do not only chuse the things of God, but secure your inclinations, and aptnesses for God, and for religion. It will be a hard thing for a man to do such a personal violence to his first desires, as to chuse whatsoever he has no mind to. A man will many times satisfy the importunity, and daily solicitations of his first longings. There is nothing therefore that can secure our love to God, but stopping the natural fountains, and making religion to grow near the first desires of the soul.

Converse with God by frequent prayer; in particular pray that your desires may be right, and love to have your affections regular and holy. To which purpose make frequent ejaculations and communions, and an assiduous daily devotion. Discover to him all your wants, complain to him of all your affronts, lay your misfortunes and all your ill news before him: Call to him for health, run to him for counsel, beg of him for pardon. It is as natural to love him to whom we make such addresses, and of whom we have such dependencies, as it is for children to love their parents.

Consider

Consider the immensity and vastness of the divine love to us, express'd in all the emanations of his providence, in his creation, in his preservation of us. For it is not my prince or my patron, or my friend that supports me, or relieves my needs, but God who made the corn that my friend sends me; who created the grapes, and supported him who has as many dependencies, and as many natural necessities, and as perfect disabilities as myself. God indeed made him the instrument of his providence to me, as he has made his own land, or his own cattle to him, with this only difference, that God by his ministration to me, intends to bestow on him a favour and reward, which to natural instruments he does not.

The least love to God that is, must be obedient, pure, simple, and communicative: It must exclude all affection to sin, and all inordinate affection to the world: It must be expressive, according to our power, in the instances of duty; and must be love for love's sake. And of this love, martyrdom is the highest instance, that is, a readiness of mind rather to suffer any evil than to do any. Of this our blessed Saviour affirmed, "That no man had greater love." This is the highest point of duty, the greatest love that God requires of man, and yet he that is imperfect must have this love also in preparation of mind; and must differ from another in nothing, except in the degrees of promptness and alacrity. In this sense, he who loves God truly, though but with a beginning and tender love, yet he loves God with all his heart; that is, with that degree of love which is the highest point of duty, and of God's charge upon us; and he that loves God with all his heart, may yet increase with the increase of God, just as there are degrees of love to God among the saints, and each of them love him with all their powers and capacities.

The greater state of this love is the zeal of love which runs out into excrescencies and suckers, like a fruitful and pleasant tree, bursting out into gums, and
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producing fruits, not of a monstrous, but of an extraordinary and heroic greatness: Concerning which these cautions are to be observed.

If zeal be in the beginnings of our spiritual birth, or be short, sudden, and transient, or be a consequent of a man's natural temper, or come upon any cause, but after a long growth of a temperate and well-regulated love, it is to be suspected for passion and forwardness, rather than the vertical point of love.

That zeal only is good, which in a fervent love, has temperate expressions; for let the affection boil as high as it can, yet if it boil over into irregular and strange actions, it will have but few, but need many excuses. Elijah was zealous for the Lord of Hosts, and yet he was so transported with it, that he could not receive answer from God, till by music he was recomposed and tamed: And Moses broke both the tables of the law, by being passionately zealous against them that broke the first.

Zeal must spend its greatest heat, principally in those things that concern ourselves; but with great care and restraint in those that concern others.

Remember, that zeal being an excrescence of divine love, must in no sense contradict any action of love. Love to God includes love to our neighbour, and therefore no pretence of zeal for God's glory must make us uncharitable to our brother; for that is just so pleasing to God, as hatred is an act of love.

That zeal which concerns others, can spend itself in nothing but arts and actions, and charitable instruments for their good. When it concerns the good of many that one should suffer, it must be done by persons of a competent authority and in great necessity; in rare instances, according to the law of God or man, but never for private right, or for trifling accidents, or in mistaken propositions. The zealots in the old law had authority to transfix and stab some certain persons, but God gave them warrant: It was in the case of idolatry, or such notorious crimes, the danger
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off, which was insupportable, and the cognizance of which was infallible; and yet that warrant expired with the synagogue.

Zeal in the instances of our duty and personal deportment, is more safe than in matters of counsel and actions, besides our just duty and tending towards perfection. Though in these instances there is not a direct sin, even where the zeal is less wary, yet there is much trouble, and some danger; as if it be spent in the too forward vows of chastity, and restraints of natural and innocent liberties.

Zeal may be let loose in the instances of internal, personal, and spiritual actions, which are matters of direct duty: As in prayers, and acts of adoration, thanksgiving, and frequent addresses; provided that no direct act pass upon them to defile them: Such as complacency and opinions of sanctity, censuring others scruples and opinions of necessity, unnecessary fears, superstitions, numberings of times and hours. But let your zeal be as forward as it will, as devout as it will, as seraphical as it will, in your direct address and intercourse with God, there is no danger, no transgression. Do all the parts of your duty as earnestly as if the salvation of all the world, and the whole glory of God, and the confusion of all devils, and all that you hope or desire, did depend upon every one action.

Let zeal be seated in the will or choice, and regulated with prudence and a sober understanding, not in the fancy and affections, for these will make it full of noise and empty of profit, but that will make it deep and smooth, material and devout.

Zeal is not a direct duty, no where commanded for itself, and is nothing but a forwardness and circumstance of another duty. It is therefore then only acceptable, when it advances the love of God and our neighbours, whose circumstances require it. That zeal is only safe, only acceptable, which increases charity directly; and because love to our neighbour, and obedience to God,
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are the two great portions of charity, we must never account our zeal to be good, but as it advances both these, if it be in a matter which relates to both, or severally, if it relates severally.

Having considered the internal acts of religion, we come now to the external; and by it we are taught to present to God our bodies, as well as our souls, for God is the Lord of both; and if the body serves the soul in actions natural, civil, and intellectual, it must not be eased only in the offices of religion, unless the body shall expect no portion of the rewards of religion, such as are resurrection, re-union, and glorification.

The actions of the body, as they serve to religion, and as they are distinguished from sobriety and justice, relate either to the word of God, or to prayer; or to repentance; and accordingly reading and hearing the word of God, fasting and corporal austerities, fasting or keeping days of public joy and thanksgiving, have ever been accounted religious acts.

Reading and hearing the word of God are but the several circumstances of the same duty, instrumental especially to faith, but consequently to all other graces of the spirit. It is all one to us whether by the eye or by the ear, the spirit conveys his precepts to us. If we hear St. Paul saying to us, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," or read it one of his epistles, in either of them we are equally and sufficiently instructed. The scriptures read are the same thing to us, which the same doctrine was, when it was preached by the disciples of our blessed Lord, and we are to learn of either with the same dispositions. The word of God is all those commandments and revelations, those promises and threatenings, recorded in the Bible: Nothing else is the word of God, that we know of; by any certain instrument. The good books and spiritual discourses, the sermons or homilies, written or spoken by men, are but the words of men, or rather explications of, and exhortations according to, the word of God; but of themselves they

they are not the word of God. In a sermon, the text only, in a proper sense, is to be called God's word, and yet good sermons are of great use and convenience for the advantages of religion. But the Holy Ghost is certainly the best preacher in the world, and the words of scripture the best sermons: All the doctrine of salvation is plainly set down there, that the most unlearned person, by hearing it read, may understand all his duty. What can be plainer spoken than this?

"Thou shalt not kill."

"Be not drunk with wine."

"Husbands, love your wives."

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them."

The wit of man cannot more plainly tell us our duty, or more fully, than the Holy Ghost has done already. What Abraham in the parable said concerning the brethren of the rich man, is here very proper: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them: but if they refuse to hear these, neither will they believe though one should arise from the dead," to preach to them.

Reading the holy scriptures is a duty expressly commanded us, and is called in scripture Preaching; all other preaching is the effect of human skill and industry, and, though of great benefit, yet it is but an ecclesiastical ordinance.

Set apart therefore some portion of your time, according to the opportunities of your calling and necessary employment, for the reading of holy scripture, and, if it be possible, every day read, or hear some of it read. You are sure that book teaches all truth, commands all holiness, and promises all happiness.

When it is in your power to chuse, accustom yourself to such portions which are most plain, and contain the story of the life and death of our blessed Saviour: Read the gospels, the psalms of David, and fail not diligently to attend to the reading of holy scriptures; when

when they are most publicly and solemnly read in churches. For at such times, besides the learning our duty, we obtain a blessing along with it, it becoming to us a part of the solemn divine worship. When the word of God is read or preached to you, be sure you be of a ready heart and mind, free from worldly cares and thoughts, diligent to hear, careful to mark, studious to remember, and desirous to practise all that is commanded. Do not hear for any other end but to become better in your life, to be instructed in every good work, and to increase in the love and service of God.

Beg of God by prayer that he would give you the spirit of obedience and profiting, and that he would by his spirit write the word in your heart; to which purpose serve yourself of some affectionate ejaculations before and after this duty.

Let not a prejudice to any man's person hinder you from receiving good by the doctrine he preaches, if it be according to godliness; but, if occasion offer it, or especially if duty present it unto you; that is, if it be preached in that assembly where you are bound to be present, accept the word preached as a message from God, and the minister as his angel in that ministration.

Consider and remark the doctrine that is presented to you, in any discourse; and if the preacher adds accidental advantages, any thing to comply with your weakness, or to put your spirit into action, or holy resolution, remember it, and make use of it. But if the preacher be a weak person, yet the text is the doctrine you are to remember, that contains all your duty. It is worth your attendance to hear that spoken often, and renewed upon your thoughts. Though you should yourself be learned, yet the same thing which you knew already, if spoken by another, may be made active by that application. I can better be comforted by my own consideration, if another hand applies
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matter to me, than if I do it myself, because the word of God does not work as a natural agent, but as a divine instrument. It does not prevail by the force of deduction, and artificial discourings only, but chiefly by way of blessing, in the ordinance and in the ministry of an appointed person. At least obey the public order, and reverence the constitution, giving good example of humility, charity, and obedience.

When scriptures are read, you are only to enquire with diligence and modesty, into the meaning of the spirit: But if homilies or sermons be made upon the words of scripture, you are to consider, whether all that is spoken be conformable to the scriptures. For though you may practise for human reasons, and human arguments, ministered by the preacher's art, yet you must practise nothing but the command of God, nothing but the doctrine of scripture.

Take the advice of some pious and prudent spiritual guide, for the choice of such good books, as may be of use and benefit for your edification, and leading a holy life. Esteem that time well accounted for, which is prudently and affectionately employed, in hearing or reading good books, and pious discourses; ever remembering that God, by hearing us speak to him in prayer, obliges us to hear him speak to us in his word, by what instrument soever it be conveyed.

True natural religion, that which was common to all nations, did principally rely upon four great propositions, 'That there is one God. That God is nothing of those things which we see. That God takes care of all things below, and governs all the world. That he is the great creator of all things without himself.—And according to these were framed the four first precepts of the decalogue. In the first commandment, the unity of the godhead is expressly affirmed; in the second, his invisibility and immateriality; in the third, his government and providence, by avenging them that swear falsely by his name; in the fourth he proclaims himself Maker of heaven and earth.

earth. For in memory of God's rest from the work of six days, the seventh was hallowed into a sabbath, and the keeping it was a confessing God to be the great maker of heaven and earth; and consequently to this, it was also a confession of his goodness, his omnipotence, and his wisdom, all which were written with a sunbeam in the great book of the creature.

As long as the law of the sabbath was bound upon God's people, so long God would have that to be the solemn manner of confessing these attributes; but when the priesthood being changed, there was also a change of the law, the great duty remained unalterable in changed circumstances. We are eternally bound to confess God Almighty to be the maker of heaven and earth, but the manner of confessing it, is changed from a rest or a doing nothing, to a speaking something, from a day to a symbol, from a ceremony to a substance, from a Jewish state to a Christian duty. We keep one day in seven, and so confess the manner and circumstances of the creation, and we rest also that we may attend on holy duties; so imitating God's rest, better than the Jew, who lay upon his face from evening to evening, and could not by stripes or wounds be raised up to steer the ship in a great storm. God's rest was not a natural cessation: He who could not labour, could not be said to rest; but God's rest is to be understood, to be a beholding and rejoicing in his work finished; and therefore we truly represent God's rest, when we confess and rejoice in God's works and God's glory.

This the Christian church does upon every day, but especially upon the Lord's day, which he has set apart for this, and all other offices of religion, being determined to this day by the resurrection of her dearest Lord, it being the first day of joy the church ever had. And now upon the Lord's day we are not tied to the rest of the sabbath, but to all the works of the sabbath. We are to abstain from bodily labour, not because it is a direct duty to us as it was to the Jews, but because it is
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necessary in order to our duty, that we attend to the offices of religion.

The observation of the Lord's day, differs nothing from the observation of the sabbath, in matter of religion, but in the manner. They differ in the ceremony and external rite. Rest with them was the principal, with us it is the accessory. They differ in the office or forms of worship, for they were then to worship God as a creator, lord and father, we are to add to that our redeemer, and all his other excellencies and mercies. And though we have more natural and proper reasons to keep the Lord's day than the sabbath, yet the Jews had a divine commandment for their day, which we have not for ours. But we have many commandments to do all that honour to God which was intended in the fourth commandment; and the apostles appointed the first day of the week for doing it in solemn assemblies.

When you go about to distinguish festival days from common, do it not by lessening the devotions of ordinary days, that the common devotion may seem bigger upon festivals, but on every day keep your ordinary devotions entire, and enlarge upon the holy day.

Upon the Lord's day we must abstain from all servile and laborious works, except such as are matters of necessity, of common life, or of great charity. For these are permitted by that authority which has separated the day for holy uses. The Sabbath of the Jews, though consisting principally in rest, and established by God, did yield to these: The labour of love and work of religion, were not against the reason and spirit of the commandment, for which the letter was decreed, and to which it ought to minister. And therefore much more is it so on the Lord's day, where the letter is wholly turned into spirit; and there is no commandment of God, but of spiritual and holy actions. The priests might kill their beasts, and dress them for sacrifice; and Christ, tho' born under the law, might heal a sick man; the sick man might carry his bed to witness his recovery,

very, and confess the mercy, and leap and dance to God for joy. An ox might be led to water, and an ass be haled out of a ditch. And a man may take physic, and he may eat meat, and therefore there were of necessity some to prepare and administer it. They were not herein tied down by strait-laced rules to minute and trifling circumstances, but they had even then a reasonable latitude; only unnecessary labour was inhibited, or such as did not minister to charity and religion. And even this is enlarged by the gospel, whose sabbath or rest is but a circumstance and accession to the principal or spiritual duties: Upon the Christian sabbath, necessity is to be served first, then charity, and then religion.

The Lord's day being the remembrance of a great blessing, must be a day of joy, festivity, spiritual rejoicing, and thanksgiving; and therefore it is a proper work of the day, to let your devotions spend themselves, in singing or reading psalms, in recounting the great works of God, in remembering his mercies, in worshipping his excellencies, in celebrating his attributes, in admiring his person, in sending portions of pleasant meat, to them for whom nothing is provided, in all the acts and instruments of advancing God's glory, and the reputation of religion, in which it were a great decency, that a memorial of the resurrection should be inserted, that the particular religion of the day be not swallowed up in the general. And of this we may the more easily serve ourselves, by rising seasonably in the morning to private devotion, and by retiring, at the leisure and spaces of the day, not employed in public offices.

Fail not to be present at the public hours and places of prayer, entering early and chearfully, attending reverently and devoutly, abiding patiently during the whole office, piously assisting at the prayers, and gladly also hearing the sermon. At no hand omitting to receive the holy communion when it is offered, unless some great reason

reason excuse it, this being the great solemnity of thanksgiving, and a proper work of the day.

After the solemnities are past, and in the intervals between the morning and evening devotions, as you shall find opportunity, visit sick persons, reconcile differences, do offices of neighbourhood; inquire into the needs of the poor, especially house-keepers, relieve them as they shall need, and you are able; for then we truly rejoice in God, when we make our neighbours, the poor members of Christ, rejoice together with us.

Whatsoever you are to do yourself as necessary, you are to take care that others also, who are under your charge, do in their station and manner. Let your servants be called to church, and all your family that can be spared from necessary and great household ministries. Those that cannot, let them go by turns, and be supplied otherwise as well as they may. Provided that on these days especially, they be instructed in the articles of faith, and necessary parts of their duty.

Those who labour hard in the week, must be eased upon the Lord's day, such ease being a great charity and alms; but on no account must they be permitted to use any unlawful games, any thing forbidden by the laws, or any thing that is dangerous, and apt to mingle sin with it; no games prompting to wantonness, to drunkenness, to quarrelling, to ridiculous and superstitious customs: but let their refreshment be innocent, charitable, of good report, and not exclusive of the duties of religion.

Within these bounds, because neither God nor man has past any obligation upon us, we must preserve our christian liberty, and not suffer ourselves to be intangled with a yoke of bondage: For even a good action may become a snare to us, if we make it an occasion of scruple, by a pretence of necessity, binding loads upon the conscience, not with the bonds of God, but of men, and of fancy, or opinion, or of tyranny. Whatsoever is laid upon us by the hands of man, must be acted

acted and accounted for by the measure of man: But our best measure is this; He keeps the Lord's day best, that keeps it with most religion and with most charity.

As to other solemnities, especially saints days, every church is to be sparing in the number of them, and to be temperate in her injunctions; not imposing them, but upon voluntary and unbusied persons, without snare or burden.

That man must certainly be a great stranger to the exercise of true piety and virtue, who is not so affected with it, as to take a great deal of pleasure and delight in it, there being nothing that can afford so much joy and satisfaction to the soul as that does. I cannot give a greater instance of it in any thing than in the common duty I have already discoursed of, the reading the word of God.

This is one of the ways of wisdom, which wise and good men often walk in; and could you but see how their hearts are affected while they read them, you would need no other argument to persuade you, it is a pleasant and delightful work. For the scriptures are the word, the oracles of God himself, and therefore they who are truly godly, cannot but find extraordinary joy and comfort in reading and consulting of them. For the will of the Almighty is there revealed to them, and his glorious properties and perfections unveiled before them. They meet there with all the promises which he has made to mankind in Jesus Christ, and with all things whatsoever, which they should desire to know. They may there learn, both how to serve God here, and to enjoy him hereafter, which are the only things a good man desires to know. And they who are truly such, cannot but be strangely affected in the reading of the scriptures; the heavenly and divine expressions which they meet with, are transporting to them, as may be seen from the example of David, "How sweet, how pleasant was the word of God to him?" And every godly man being of the same temper and disposition
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of David, he cannot but find as much comfort and joy in his divine word, as the royal Psalmist did, who therefore describes a good man, by "his delighting," as he did, "in the law of God."

Praying and praising God are ways of piety and pleasure too: For by prayer, they who are truly pious converse with God himself, with an humble confidence, that whatsoever they ask in Christ's Name, they shall receive, which must needs afford them more joy and comfort than any one is able to conceive, but they that have it, especially praising of him being always joined with praying to him, which is so high, so holy, so heavenly a work, so agreeable to the nature of the saints, that it cannot but raise their spirits to the highest pitch of joy and pleasure. This is the constant business and recreation of the glorified saints in heaven; and who is able to express the pleasure which the truly pious take, in frequenting the public ordinances, to present themselves together in a solemn and reverent manner before the eternal God, to implore his mercy, to magnify his Name, to hear his Word, and to perform their homage and devotion? How did David rejoice to go to the house of God? How did he grieve, when, by reason of his banishment, he was deprived of this mercy? How did he envy the very birds, that could go nearer to God's altar than himself? How does he beg to be restored to his former liberty, that he might freely go to the house of God again? preferring it before all other joys. And, doubtless, all those that are as holy as David was, cannot but find the same delight, in worshipping and adoring God, as he did. They cannot but find these ways of wisdom to be the ways of pleasantness and peace.

Meditating upon God and Christ, upon heaven, and the glories of the world to come, is a duty no less pleasant than profitable to the saints of God. By this means they have their conversation always in heaven, there solacing their souls in the contemplation of divine

perfections. As the lustful man is delighted with beholding of earthly beauty, and the covetous with his worldly riches ; so and much more he that is heavenly and godly must needs be delighted with meditating upon God and heaven, objects agreeable to his temper and constitution. We may therefore boldly say, There is no pleasure like to his who always dwells in heaven, conversing with those transcendent beauties, glories and perfections that are there. This is what the royal Psalmist found “ so sweet and pleasant to his soul.” What can be more refreshing to a divine spirit than the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper ? We feed there upon angels food, the bread of life that came down from heaven. We are guests at Christ’s own table, and have nothing less than all the merits of his death and passion displayed and set before us, which the truly holy cannot but look upon as the best banquet, the most pleasant feast, which they ever were or can be invited to in this world. If the duties which wisdom requires to be performed, afford so much comfort and delight to them that daily perform them, what then shall we think of the pleasures which a good man takes in the exercise of all true grace and virtue ? What shall we think of it ? Why certainly, that it is far greater than we are able to think it ; for no man can conceive it but he that has it. That we may understand something of it, let us consider the true nature of piety ; that it consists in the right temper and disposition of mind, reducing all its powers and faculties into their proper frame and constitution. Thus it may justly be termed, the health and soundness of the soul, as all vices are diseases and distempers in it. And therefore, as an healthful and sound body is not only free from pains and aches, but all its natural motions are pleasing and delightful to it ; so is it with the pious soul, all pious and virtuous actions being agreeable to its nature, the exerting them cannot but be very grateful and pleasant to it. As when such a soul exercises itself in the loving of God, and longing after him, in trusting
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on him, and rejoicing in him, and the like, such acts as these are the natural product of that grace and virtue which is sown in the heart. That man would do violence to his renewed nature that should not exert them, and therefore he cannot but take extraordinary delight in the exerting or acting of them. The same may be said of all other virtues and graces whatsoever, as faith, humility, self-denial, temperance, patience, truth, faithfulness, justice, meekness, charity, and whatsoever else it is that the hearts and lives of true saints are adorned with. For such acts as these, flowing naturally from a pious soul, renewed and assisted always by the grace of God, they cannot but always carry a secret kind of pleasure and delight along with them, which none can perceive, much less partake of, but the soul from whence they flow.

Besides this agreeableness which there is between all acts of piety and pious souls, he that sincerely performs those duties, and exercises those graces which God requires, enjoys by it peace of conscience, an unspeakable joy and satisfaction in his mind, arising from the sense and consideration, that he has done his duty, and that God is pleased with him. For the apprehension of God's love and favour is certainly the greatest pleasure and happiness that men or angels are capable of. But according to our obedience to God's laws, so generally is our sense of his love to us. If we have sincerely endeavoured to observe whatsoever he has commanded, we have just ground to hope for Christ's sake he will accept of us, and is well pleased with us; which must needs affect us with extraordinary joy and comforts, as Saint Paul assures us it did him.

This is what every Christian may often experience. When we have been conscious to ourselves of some wilful or notorious sin, have not our consciences often flown in our faces, and raised storms and tempests in our breasts, ready to sink us every moment into horror and despair? On the other side, when we have faithfully dis-

charged our duties, and kept our "conscience void of offence towards God and towards man," have we not found our minds serene, and our whole souls transported into pleasure and satisfaction, at the apprehension and remembrance of it? It is thus with them that walk only by the light of nature; and how much more then with such as are guided by the light of the Gospel, and assisted with the principles of true grace? Their blessed souls must needs be affected with extraordinary comfort and joy, at the sense of their serving and pleasing God, in the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, which he steadfastly believes in, and relies continually upon, as having the Word of God himself for it, that what he sincerely endeavours to do, is acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. And whoever believes this, as every pious man certainly does, cannot but take inexpressible delight in serving God; because he believes that for Christ's sake God is pleased with what he does, and accepts of it as well as if it was every way as perfect and exact as the law itself requires it should be: Which is so great, so high a comfort, that they who experience it in themselves can never be able to express it to others.

You see therefore what peace and pleasure there is in the ways of wisdom, in the several acts of piety, which they who are truly godly continually exercise themselves in. The pleasures such enjoy far exceed all the sensual delights of the world. They who devote themselves wholly to the service of God, live the most pleasant and comfortable lives of any men in the world: They are indeed the only men that know what pleasure and comfort means; and, by consequence, that the "ways of wisdom" are not only the "ways of pleasantness," but the only ways of pleasantness that it is possible for any man to walk in.

All other pleasures only tickle the senses and delight the fancies of men, and so have no other being or existence in the world but what our deluded imaginations give them. Abstract your fancy from all things here
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below, and what will then become of your pleasure in them? How soon will it vanish into smoke and vapours, into vanity and vexation of spirit? Think gold dirt, and it is so: Think the pomp and glory of the world to be mere dream and shadow, and it is so: Think lust, luxury, drunkenness, and gluttony to be beastly and brutish fooleries, and they are so. For these are things which fools and madmen, nay, the brute beasts themselves, take as much seeming pleasure in as the soberest and learnedest men can do. We should therefore never fancy any thing of pleasure in such things as these are, were not our imaginations so fearfully corrupted and depraved, as to present every thing in a wrong shape, and under false colours, to us. For we are all men, rational creatures, made after the image of God, endowed with spiritual and immortal souls, as well as with frail and corruptible bodies; and therefore it cannot in reason be imagined, but that far other and higher delights are designed for us, than such as brute beasts themselves partake of as well as we.

The pleasures which pious men enjoy are quite of another nature: They are not seated in the body or senses, but the soul itself is the subject of them, and all its powers and faculties are affected and delighted with them. Wherefore our Saviour, to distinguish them from all other pleasures, calls them "the rest or happiness of our souls." The things of this world may somewhat ease and refresh our bodies; but they cannot reach the soul at all, so as to afford it any thing of comfort and satisfaction. It was, on this account, a foolish thing for the rich man in the Gospel to say to his soul, "Take thine ease," because his worldly goods were increased, as you see he did. But no less a person than the great God himself called him fool for his pains. He was a fool indeed, that thought his earthly riches could give ease to his soul. No, none but Christ can ever do that, neither does he ever do it to any but the truly pious: They may say indeed to their souls, "Souls, take your ease;" for you have

goods real, spiritual, and eternal: goods laid up for you, not only for many years, but for ever and ever. This is more than any one else can say; and therefore they must be acknowledged to be the only persons that enjoy true peace and pleasure in the world; such peace and pleasure as becomes a man and a Christian to solace and delight himself continually in, the soul itself being the proper and immediate judge of it.

As the pleasures which arise from piety exceed all others in the subject, so do they in the object too. Whatever sensitive pleasures men enjoy, they are no more, nor greater, than what the silly creatures upon earth can afford them. They look no higher than this lower world; and if they can make a shift to pick up something which looks like pleasure in it, they are beholden to every inanimate and senseless creature for it. Thus the covetous man takes pleasure in refined dirt, the epicure in meats and drinks, the vain-glorious man in empty titles of honour; and every one but he who is sincerely pious can find no other pleasure in the world, but what he is forced to fetch from sensible and terrestrial objects, as being the only things he converses with, tho' they were never intended to make men happy.

But it is not so with the sons of wisdom, with those who are born again, and so become children of the most High. They feed not like swine upon the husks of this lower world, but have their heads and hearts continually taken up with the contemplation and enjoyments of the chiefest good, the eternal God himself; or at least with longing and thirsting after him, and with rejoicing at every intimation that they have of his love and kindness to them: He who is the only centre of all perfections is the only object of their joy and pleasure; the "light of his countenance," that is the manifestation of his grace and mercy to them, is the only good that they desire, or rejoice in. Hence such as are truly wise and godly, disdaining to converse with nothing else but dire
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and clay, as silly mortals on earth do; "their conversation is in heaven:" there are all the wealth and joys that are the objects of their desires; and therefore their thoughts and affections are always there: and as there is nothing upon earth, so neither is there any thing in heaven, which they desire in comparison of God. All the world, the whole creation, is nothing to a godly man. The eternal God, the Creator himself, is the portion of their cup, and the lot of their inheritance: He is their hope and help, their joy and desire, their light and love, their strength and power, their wealth and riches, their sun, their shield, and their exceeding great reward: He is their all, their more than all, their God. And seeing this supreme and universal Being of the world is the only object of a man's delight, the ways of wisdom must needs be acknowledged to surpass all other ways in pleasantness and peace, as much as heaven does earth, and the infinite Creator all finite creatures.

The pleasures of pious men are true, solid, pure, and unmixed; which cannot be said of the sensual delights of this world, which are always ushered in, attended, and followed with grief and trouble. They are no pleasures till some preceding pain or sorrow makes them so: And, as they begin, so they must go on and end with sadness, as Solomon himself, who made as much trial of them as ever man did, found by his own experience, and has therefore expressly asserted: But it is not so with the godly; their joys are real and substantial, without any alloy of trouble. They depend not upon the constitution of their bodies, but the right disposition of their minds; which being always preserved in a due temper, their pleasures are not subject to such changes and vicissitudes as others are, but their hearts are always fixed, trusting upon God.

They are firm and constant pleasures, not like the uncertain delights of sinful men, which ebb and flow with the stream of worldly prosperity, and depend al-

together upon the unconstant smiles of fortune in this world: they are merry and jolly while they prosper; but let them be deprived of any part of their estates, crossed in their relations or designs, or laid upon a bed of sickness, and then all their pleasure is gone, nothing they have can afford them any comfort or relief, but their thoughts trouble them, and every thing seems sad and sorrowful to them. The pleasures of piety are not such as these: They are not taken from any sublunary objects, and therefore do not increase or wane with them. But the good man is as chearful when the world frowns, as when it smiles upon him: However the world goes with him, it is all one to him: He is still the same; though he loses all things here below, he loses nothing of his joy; for that was placed only upon God before, and so it is still, in the midst of all his thoughts within. The comforts of God still rejoice and delight his soul. Though he be upon his sick, his death bed, his comfort still remains; his sickness cannot be so painful and tormenting to his body, but the testimony of a good conscience is still as pleasing and supporting to his soul.

The pleasures of the righteous are full and satisfying; the things of this world are all so vain and empty, that whatever men fancy, they can never be satisfied with them; and the reason is, because the soul is capable of more than all this world; wherefore its desires being as large as its capacities, can never be satisfied with any thing or all things in it. But the godly man drinks continually at the fountain head, the inexhaustible fountain of all true joy and happiness. God himself is the only object of his delight, in whom he cannot but rest fully satisfied, being not able to desire more than he has in him.

The pleasures of this world are but brutish and sensual, no better than the very beasts themselves enjoy as well as men. But the joys of the godly are angelical and divine, such joy as the cherubins and seraphins, the

the angels and archangels, enjoy in heaven, such even as God himself enjoys. For what does he rejoice in but in himself? and what do they rejoice in but only him? Therefore if you would know what joys there are in heaven, you must look into the breast of a pious man; you may there see them represented as clearly as they can be in this world; but you cannot read them nor understand them, unless yourselves be the pious men ye look into.

The pleasures of this life are at the best but the pleasures of this life; when this life is ended, you must leave them all, so as never to return to them again; but, instead of present pleasures and delights, you will have grief and sorrow, pain and torment, misery and desolation for ever. It is not so with the joys of the pious: They are begun in this life, and perfected in the life to come, so as to continue in their lustre and beauty, in their height and perfection, to all eternity. Neither will they only last for ever, but the pious shall know, and be assured of it too, which will be a great addition to them. For the very thoughts of losing these pleasures, as men of this world must lose theirs, would damp all the comfort they take in them. But there will be no fear of that; they are not such pleasures as time can consume, or eternity itself diminish: he who enjoys them once, will be certain to enjoy them for ever.

How great then are the mistakes that are in the world concerning piety, as if it was a melancholy and disconsolate course of life? Whereas it is plain that no persons in the world enjoy such pleasures as the godly do; indeed, none but they enjoy any true pleasure at all. The rest of mankind are altogether unacquainted with true joy and comfort, true peace and pleasure, because they walk not in the ways of wisdom. How great is the folly and madness of sinful men, who embrace the shadow for the substance, and take up with seeming instead of real joys? They are always thirsting after

pleasure, but can never be satisfied with it, till they be satisfied and made truly holy.

Wherefore, as ever we desire to lead cheerful and comfortable, pleasant and happy lives, either in this world, or that which is to come, we must resign ourselves to God, and make it our business to please him, walking continually in the ways of wisdom; and then we shall have pleasure indeed: Such pleasure as the world can neither give, nor take from us; such pleasure as will refresh our minds, comfort our hearts, support our spirits, rejoice our souls in all conditions, and make us happy both now and for ever.

These several ideas of religion and virtue will not be so useful as one might wish, unless we descend also into particulars, and treat of the human as well as Christian virtues; all which are included in a Christian life, and the practice of them effectually conduces to our future happiness.

All the virtues which belong to a man, considered merely as a rational creature, consist in these five particulars; prudence, moderation, fortitude, temperance, humility. All which are also essential parts of the Christian life.

Prudence is the root and ground-work of all our virtues. It is that which gives law and scope to all our motions; that proposes the ends, and prescribes the measures of our actions. For prudence consists in being guided and directed by right reason, as it proposes to us the worthiest ends, and directs us to the fittest and most effectual means of obtaining them. To live prudently, is to live in the constant exercise of our reason, and to be continually pursuing such ends as right reason proposes, by such means as right reason directs us to, which is the proper business of all the virtues of religion; which is therefore so frequently called in scripture Wisdom, or Prudence.

Our reason being the noblest principle of our nature, that by which we are raised above the level of brutes, by which

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which we are allied to angels, and border upon God himself; we ought upon this account to be submitted to, as the supreme regent of all our other powers, to be looked upon as the rule of our will, and the guide of all our animal motions. And when, to gratify our sensual appetites, or unreasonable passions, we either neglect those ends which our reason proposes to us, or pursue them by such means as our reason disallows of, we reverse the very order of our natures; and while we do so, it is impossible we should be happy, either here or hereafter: For every thing you see is diseased, while it is in an unnatural state and condition, while its parts are displaced, or put into disorder, or distorted into an unnatural figure. So it is with a man, who while he preserves his faculties in a natural station, and subordination to each other, while he keeps his affections and appetites in subjection to his will, and his will to his reason, he is calm and quiet, and enjoys within himself perpetual ease and tranquillity. But when once he breaks this order, and suffers his passions or appetites to usurp the place of his reason, to impose contrary ends to it, or prescribe contrary means; his faculties, like disjointed members, are in continual anguish and anxiety. And hence it is, that in the course of a wicked life, we feel such restless contentions between our spirit and flesh, the law in our minds and the law in our members; because our nature is out of tune, its faculties are displaced and disordered, and that sovereign principle of reason, which should sway and govern us, is deposed, and made a vassal to our appetites and passions. For in all our evil courses we choose and refuse, resolve and act, not as reason directs us, but as sense and passion bias us; and our reason, having nothing to do in all this brutish scene of action, either sleeps it out without minding or regarding, or else sits by as an idle spectator of it, and only censures and condemns it: It is this which causes all that tumult and confusion that is in our natures; and till by the exercise of prudence our

faculties are reduced and set in order again, our mind will be like our body, while its bones are ~~not~~ joint, continually restless and unquiet; and therefore to remove this great indisposition of our nature to happiness, prudence is required of us, at one of the principal virtues of the heavenly part of the Christian life.

"See," says the apostle, "that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." In the whole course of your actions, take heed that ye follow the guidance of your reason, and do not suffer yourselves to be seduced by your blind passions and appetites, which are the guides of fools. And accordingly Saint Paul prays for his Christian Colossians, "that they might be filled with the knowledge of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." That they might have such a knowledge of God's will, as might render them truly prudent, and cause them to pursue the best ends by the best means.

That the practice of this virtue of prudence is a most proper and effectual means of our eternal happiness, is evident from hence, because the practice of it is a constant exercise of reason. For to act prudently in religion, is to follow the best reason, to aim at heaven, which is the best end, and to direct our actions thither by the best rules: It is to consult what is best for ourselves, and how it may be most effectually obtained. In a word, it is to intend the chiefest good above all, and to level our lives and actions most directly towards it.

By living in the continual practice of religious prudence, we shall by degrees habituate ourselves to a life of reason, and shake off that drowsy charm of sense and passion, which hangs upon our minds, and renders our faculties so dull and unactive. Having disused ourselves a while to obey their blind and imperious dictates, our reason will reassume its throne in us, and direct all our aims and endeavours to what is fittest and most reasonable. For we being finite and limited beings, cannot operate several ways with equal vigour at once. Our rational and sensitive propensions are
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made in such a regular and æquilibrions order, that proportionally as one increases in activity, the other always decays; and accordingly as we abate in the strength of our brutish, shall we improve in the vigour of our rational faculties. But to act suitably to their natures, being the end of all our faculties and powers of action, the God of nature, to excite them to it, has founded all their pleasure in the vigorous exercise of them upon suitable objects: Since therefore our reason is the best and noblest of all powers of action, the greatest pleasure we are capable of must certainly spring out of the exercise of it. Wherefore since prudence consists in the use of our reason, the practice of it must needs effectually contribute to our pleasure and happiness: For use and exercise will mightily strengthen and improve our reason, and render it not only more apprehensive of what is fit and reasonable, but also more persuasive and prevalent; and when once it is improved into a prevailing principle of action, and has acquired not only skill enough to prescribe what is right to us, but also power enough to persuade us to comply with its prescriptions, to choose and refuse, to love and hate, to hope and fear, desire and delight, and regulate all our actions by its laws and dictates, then are we entering upon our heaven and happiness.

That which makes us unhappy is, that our sinful and unreasonable affections do so hamper and intangle us, that we cannot freely exercise our faculties upon such objects as are most suitable to them; that our minds and wills are so fettered by our vicious inclinations, that we cannot exert them upon that which is most worthy to be known and chosen, without a great deal of difficulty and distraction. But now, under the conduct of our reason, our faculties will by degrees recover their freedom, and disengage themselves from those vicious incumbrances, which do so clog and interrupt them in their rational motions. When this is thoroughly effected, we are in full possession of the heavenly

venly state. Our passions and appetites being perfectly subdued to our reason, all our rational faculties will be free, and every one will move towards its proper objects, without any let or hindrance; our understanding will be swallowed up in a fixed contemplation of the sublimest truth, our wills entirely united to the choice and embraces of the truest good, our affections unalterably devoted to the love and fruition of the most excellent beauty and perfection; and in this consists the happy state of heaven.

Another virtue which appertains to man, considered merely as a rational animal, is moderation, which consists in proportioning our concupiscible affections to the just worth and value of things, so as neither to spend our affections too prodigally upon trifles, nor yet to be over sparing or niggardly of them to real and substantial goods; but to love, desire and expect things more or less, according to the estimate which our best and most impartial reason makes of their worth and goodness. For he who affects things more than in the esteem of reason they deserve, affects them irrationally, and regulates his passion by his wild extravagant fancy, and not by his reason and judgment. While men do thus neglect their reason, and accustom themselves to desire and love, and affect without it, they necessarily disable themselves to enjoy a rational happiness. For besides, that their rational faculties, being thus laid by and unemployed, will naturally contract rust, and grow every day more weak and relapse: Beside, that their unexercised reason will melt away in sloth and idleness, and all its vital powers freeze for want of motion, and like standing water, stagnate and gather more corruption, and putrify by degrees, till at last it will be impossible to revive them to the vigorous exercise of motion, in which their pleasure and happiness consists: Besides this, I say, by habituating ourselves to affect things irrationally, to love the least goods most, and the greatest least, we shall disable ourselves from enjoying any goods, but

Only such as cannot make us happy: For he who loves any good more than it is worth, can never be happy in the enjoyment of it, because he thinks there is more in it than he finds, and so is always disappointed in the fruition of it. And the grief of being disappointed in what he expects, does commonly countervail the pleasure of what he finds and enjoys while he is in the pursuit of any good, which he inordinately debates upon; he is wild and imaginative, he swells with fantastic joys, and juggles himself into expectations, which are as large and boundless as his desires. But when once he is seized of it, and finds how vastly the enjoyment falls short of his expectation, his pleasure is presently lost in his disappointment, and so he remains as unsatisfied as ever. Thus if he were to spend an eternity in such disputes and enjoyments, his life would be nothing but an everlasting succession of expectations and disappointments.

Besides which also, it is to be considered, that all these lesser goods, which are the objects of our extravagant affections, are as fleeting as they are false. The lesser goods are those that are for the worst part of our body and animal life; the proper goods whereof are the outward sensitive enjoyments of this world: All which, when we leave this world, we must leave for ever, and go away into eternity with nothing about us, but only the good or bad dispositions of our souls, and that which is the prevailing temper of our souls in this life, will doubtless be so in the other too. For the entering into the other world, though it will, doubtless, improve those souls which were really good before, yet it is not to be imagined how it should create those good, who were habitually bad. And if we retain in the other world, that prevailing affection to these sensitive goods which we contracted in this, it must necessarily render us unspeakably miserable there. For every lust the soul carries into the other world, will, by being eternally separated from its pleasures, convert into an hopeless desire, and upon that account grow more furious and

and impatient. There is none of all the torments of the mind comparable to that of an outrageous desire, joined with despair of satisfaction; which is just the case of sensual and worldly-minded souls in the other life, where they are full of sharp and unrebated desire; and in this desolate condition they are forced to wander to and fro, tormented with a restless rage, an hungry and unsatisfied desire, craving food, but neither finding nor expecting any; and so in unexpressible anguish they pine away a long eternity. And though they might find content and satisfaction, could they but divert their affections another way, and reconcile them to the heavenly enjoyments; yet being irrecoverably pre-engaged to sensual goods, they have no favour or relish of any thing else, but are like feverish tongues that disgust and nauseate the most grateful liquors, by reason of their own overflowing gall. So impossible is it for men to be ever happy either here or hereafter, so long as their affections to the lesser goods of this world, do so immoderately exceed the worth and value of them.

The peculiar office of the virtue of moderation, is to bound our concupiscible affections, and proportion them to the intrinsic worth of those outward goods which we affect and desire. For though the word moderation, according to our present acceptance of it, be no where to be found in the New Testament, yet the virtue expressed by it is frequently enjoined; as particularly, where we are forbid "to set our affections upon the things of this earth:" And again, "to love the world and the things that are in the world." Which phrases are not to be so understood, as if we were not to love the enjoyments of the world at all, for they are the blessings of God, and such as he has proposed to us in his promises, as the rewards and encouragements of our obedience: And certainly he would never encourage us to obey him, by the hope of such rewards as are unlawful for us to desire and love. The meaning therefore of these prohibitions is, that we should so moderate our affections to the world, as not
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to permit them to exceed the real worth and value of its enjoyments. For it is not simply our loving it, but our loving it to such a degree as is inconsistent with our love of God, that is forbidden here. And hence covetousness, which is an immoderate desire of the world, is called idolatry, because it sets the world in the place of God, and gives it that supreme degree of affection which is only due to him; and this the apostle calls inordinate affection, because it extravagantly exceeds the intrinsic worth and value of its objects.

That this virtue of moderation does mightily contribute to our acquisition of heavenly happiness, is evident from what has been already said, namely, that 'till our affections are thus moderated, we can have no favour or relish of the heavenly enjoyments; for in this corrupt state of our natures, we generally understand by our affections, which, like coloured glass, represent all objects to us in their hue and complexion. Thus when a man's actions are immediately carried out towards worldly things, they will be sure by degrees to corrupt and deprave his judgment, and render him as unfit to judge of divine and spiritual enjoyments, as a ploughman is to be moderator in the schools: For though in his nature there is a tendency to rational pleasures, yet this he may, and very frequently does, stifle and extinguish by addicting himself wholly to the delights and gratifications of his sense, which by degrees will so melt down his rational inclinations into his sensual, and confound and mingle them with his carnal appetites, that his soul will wholly sympathize with his body, and have all likes and dislikes in common with it.

Now to such a soul, the spiritual world must needs be a barren wilderness; where no good grows that it can live upon, none but what is nauseous and distasteful to his coarse and vitiated palate: Were we admitted to that heavenly place where the blessed dwell, yet unless we had acquired their heavenly disposition and temper, we could never participate with them in their pleasures;

pleasures; for so great would be the antipathy of our sensual affections to them, that we ~~would~~ ^{could} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~be~~ ^{be} ~~able~~ ^{be} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~draw~~ ^{draw} ~~us~~ ^{us} ~~away~~ ^{away} from them, and rather chuse to be forever insensible, than to be condemned to an everlasting conception of what is so ungrateful to our natures. Wherefore till we have in some measure moderated our concupiscible affections, and weaned them from their excessive dotages upon sensual good, it is impossible we should enjoy the happiness of heaven.

Another virtue which belongs to a man considered merely as a rational creature, is fortitude, which in the largest sense consists in not permitting our irascible affections to exceed those evils or dangers, which we seek to repel or avoid, in keeping our fear and anger, our malice, envy, and revenge, in such due subjection, as not to let them exceed those bounds which reason and the nature of things prescribe them. Fortitude is not taken here in the narrow sense of the moralists, as it is a medium between irrational fear and foolhardiness, but as it is the rule by which all those irascible passions in us, which arise from the sense of any evil or danger, ought to be guided and directed. That by which we are to guard and defend ourselves against all those troublesome and disquieting impressions which outward evils and dangers are apt to make upon our minds. In this latitude, fortitude not only comprehends courage as it is opposed to fear, but also gentleness as it is opposed to fierceness; sufferance as it is opposed to impatience; contentedness as it is opposed to envy; and meekness as it is opposed to malice and revenge; all which are the passions of weak and pusillanimous minds, that are not able to withstand an evil, nor endure the least touch of it without being startled and disordered; that are so softened with baseness and cowardice, that they cannot resist the most gentle impressions of injury. For as sick persons are offended with the light of the sun and the freshness of the air, which are highly pleasant and delightful to such as are well and in health; so persons of weak feeble minds

minds are easily offended, their spirits are so tender and effeminate, that they cannot endure the least air of evil should blow upon them; and what would be only a diversion to a courageous soul, troubles and incommodes them. Whatever courage such persons may pretend to, it is merely heat and ferment of their blood and spirits; a courage wherein game-cocks and mastiffs outvie the greatest heroes of them all: But as to that which is truly rational and manly, which consists in a firm composedness of mind in the midst of evil or dangerous accidents, they are the most wretched cowards in nature. He that has true fortitude, is hardened against evil upon rational principles, he is fortified and guarded with reason and consideration, that no dolorous accident from without is able to invade his soul, or raise any violent commotions in it. In a word, he hath such a constant power over his irascible affections, as not to be over-prone either to be timorous in danger, or envious in want, or impatient in suffering, or angry in contempt, or malicious and revengeful under injuries and provocations: And till we have acquired this virtue, we can never be happy here or hereafter.

While we are in this world, we must expect to be encompassed with continual crouds of evil accidents, some or other of which will be always pressing upon and justling against us: If our minds therefore are sore and uneasy, and over-apt to be affected with the evil; we shall be continually pained and disquieted: For whereas were our minds but calm and easy, all the evil accidents that befall us, would be but like a shower of hail upon the tiles of a music-room, which with all its clatter and noise disturbs not the harmony that is within; our being too apt to be moved into passion by them, uncovers our mind to them, and lays it open to the tempest. If our reason commands not our passions, outward accidents will, and according as they happen to be good or bad, so must we be sure still to be happy or miserable; and in this condition like a ship without a pilot, in the midst
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of a tempestuous sea, we are the sport of every wind and wave, and know not, till the event has determined it, how the next billow will dispose of us, whether it will dash us against a rock, or drive us into a quiet harbour.

So miserable is our condition ~~here~~, while we are utterly destitute of this virtue of fortitude; but much more wretched will the want of it necessarily render us hereafter. For all those affections which fall under the inspection and government of fortitude, are in their excesses naturally vexatious to the mind, and always disturb and raise tumults in it: For so wrath and impatience distract and alienate it from itself, confound its thoughts and shuffle them together into a heap of wild and disorderly fancies; so malice, envy and revenge, do fill it with anxious biting thoughts, which like young vipers gnaw the womb that bears them, and fret and gall the wretched mind which forms and gives them entertainment. If we go into the other world with these affections unmortified in us, they will not only be far more violent and outrageous than now, and we shall not only have a far quicker sense of them than now, but this our sharp sense of them will be pure and simple without any intermixture of pleasure to soften and allay it. What exquisite devils and tormentors will they prove when an extreme rage and hate, envy and revenge, shall be altogether like so many hungry vultures preying on our hearts; and our mind shall be continually baited and worried with all the furious thoughts which these outrageous passions can suggest to us: When with the meagre look of envy we shall gaze on the regions of happiness, and incessantly pine and grieve at the felicities of those that inhabit them; when through a sense of our own folly, and of the miserable effects of it, our rage and impatience shall be heightened and boiled up into a diabolical fury; and when at the same time an inveterate malice against all that we converse with, and a fierce desire of revenging ourselves upon those that have contributed to our ruin, shall, like a wolf in our breasts, be continually

nually gnawing and feeding upon our souls: What an insupportable hell shall we be to ourselves? Doubtless that outward hell, to which bad spirits are condemned, is very terrible, but as doubtless the worst of their hell is within themselves, and their own devilish passions are severer furies to them than all those devils that are without them.

To remove therefore this great impediment of our happiness, Christianity enjoins us to practise this necessary virtue of fortitude, by moderating our anger and impatience, by suppressing our envy, and extinguishing all our unreasonable hatred and desire of revenge. How much the practice of this virtue conduces to our eternal happiness, is evident from hence, that all the diseases and distempers which our minds are capable of, are nothing else but the excesses of its concupiscible and irascible affections, nothing but its being affected with good and evil, beyond those limits and measures which right reason prescribes. Did we but love our outward goods according to the value at which true reason rates them, we should neither be vexed with an impatient desire of them while we want, nor disappointed of our expectation while we enjoy them. When our desires towards these outward goods are reduced to that coolness and moderation, as neither to be impatient in the pursuit, nor dissatisfied in the enjoyment of them, it is impossible they should give any disturbance to our minds: On the other hand, did we but take care to regulate our resentments of outward evils and dangers, as right reason advises, they would never be able to hurt or discompose our minds; for right reason advises, that we should not so resent them, as to increase and aggravate them; and he who follows her advice, and conducts his irascible affections by it, has a mind that is elevated above the reach of injury, that sits above the clouds in a calm and quiet region, and with a brave indifference hears the rolling thunder grumble and burst under his feet. When outward evils fall upon
timorous,

timorous, peevish and malicious spirits, like-sparks of fire upon a heap of gunpowder, they presently blow them up and put them all in combustion: When they happen to a dispassionate mind, they fall like stones upon a bed of down, where they lie easily and quietly, and are received with a calm and soft compliance. The health of a reasonable soul consists in being perfectly reasonable, in having all its affections perfectly subdued, and clothed in the livery of its reason. While it is thus, it cannot be diseased in that spiritual state, in which it will be wholly separated from all bodily sense and passion, because it has no affection in it that can any way disturb and ruffle its calm and gentle thoughts: And then feeling all within itself to be well, and as it should be, every string tuned into a perfect harmony, every motion and affection corresponding with the most perfect draughts and models of its own reason, it must needs highly approve of, and be perfectly satisfied with itself; and while it surveys its own motions and actions, it must necessarily have a most delicious gust and relish of them, they being all such as its best and purest reason approves of, with a full and ungratifying judgment. And thus the soul being cured of all irregular affections, and removed from all corporeal passion, will live in a perfect health and vigour, and for ever enjoy within itself a heaven of content and peace.

Another virtue which appertains to a man, considered merely as a rational creature, is temperance, which consists in not indulging our bodily appetites to the hurt and prejudice of our rational nature, or in refraining from those excesses of bodily pleasures, of eating, drinking, and venery, which do either disorder our reason, or indispose us to enjoy the purer pleasures of the mind. All excesses of bodily pleasures are naturally prejudicial to our reason, as they indispose those bodily organs, by which it operates; for so drunkenness dilates the brain, which is the mint of the understanding, and drowns those images it stamps upon it, in a hood of unwholesome
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rheums and moiflures; and gluttony clogs the animal fpirits, which are, as it were, the wings of the mind, and indisposes them for the higheft and nobleft flights of reafon; fo wantonnefs chafes the blood into feverifh heats, and by caufing it to boil up too faft in the brain, diforders the motions of the fpirits there, and fo confounds the ideas, that the mind can have no clear or diftinct perception of them, by which means our intellectual faculties are very often interrupted and forced to fit ftill for want of proper tools to work with; and fo by often loitering, grow by degrees littlefs and unactive, and at the laft, are utterly indisposed to any rational eperations.

Befides this, which muft needs be a mighty prejudice to our rational nature; by too much familiarizing ourfelves to bodily pleasures, we fhall break off all our acquaintance with fpiritual ones, and grow by degrees, fuch utter ftrangers to them, that we fhall never be able to relifh and enjoy them, and our foul will contract fuch an uxorious fondnefs of the body, as the fhop of all the pleasure it was ever acquainted with, that it will never be able to live happily without it. For though in its feparate ftate, it cannot be fupposed that the foul will retain the appetites of the body, yet if while it is in the body, it wholly abandons itfelf to corporeal pleasures, it may, and doubtlefs will, retain a vehement hankering after it, and longing to be reunited to it, which, I conceive, is the only fenfuality that a feparated foul is capable of: For when fuch a foul arrives into the fpiritual world, her having wholly accuftomed herfelf to bodily pleasures, and never experienced any other, will neceffarily render her incapable of enjoying the pleasures of pure and bleffed fpirits: Thus being utterly deftitute of all her dear delights and fatisfactions, which are fuch as ſhe knows ſhe can never enjoy but in conjunction with the body, all her appetite and longing muft neceffarily be an outrageous defire of being embodied again, that fo ſhe may be capable of repeating
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her old sensual pleasures, and acting over the brutish scene anew.

Hence among other reasons, it was, that the primitive Christians did so severely abstain from bodily pleasures, that by this means they might gently wear the soul from the body, and teach it beforehand to live upon the delights of separated spirits; that upon its separation, it might drop into eternity like fruit from the tree, with ease and willingness; and that by accustoming it before to spiritual pleasures and delights, it might acquire such a savory sense and relish of them, as to be able when it came into the spiritual world, to live wholly upon them, and to be so entirely satisfied with them, as not to be endlessly vexed with a tormenting desire of returning to the body again: They did so use them, that, as much as in them lay, they might wear their souls from all such pleasures, that so they might have the better appetite to the spiritual food, upon which they were to live for ever. Hitherto tend all those precepts concerning “abstaining from worldly lusts which war against our souls, and mortifying the deeds of the body,” and keeping under the body, and being temperate in all things, “to watch and to be sober, and walking honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in excess of wine, revellings and banquetings.” The sense of all which is, that we should not indulge our bodily appetites, to the vitiating and depraving our spiritual; that we should not plunge ourselves so far in the pleasures of the flesh, as to drown our sense and perception of divine and heavenly enjoyments, but should so subdue and mortify our sensuality, as that it may not have dominion over us, nor be the prevalent delight and complacency of our souls; but that the commanding bias, and swaying propension within us, may be towards divine and spiritual enjoyments.

It is at the first view evident, how much the practice of this virtue conduces to our future happiness; for by taking us off from all excess of bodily pleasures, it disposes

poses us to enjoy the pleasures of heaven, and conſtitutes our ſouls to them. Thus when after a long exerciſe of temperance we come to leave the body, our ſoul will be ſo looſened from it beforehand, and rendered ſo indifferent to the delights of it, that we ſhall be able to part both with it and them without any great regret or reluctance, and live from them for ever without any diſquieting longings or hankerings after them. For as when we are grown up by age and experience to a ſenſe of more manly pleaſures, we deſpiſe nuts and rattles which when we were children we accounted our happineſs, and ſhould have reckoned ourſelves undone had we been deprived of them; ſo when by the practice of a ſevere repentance we have acquired a thorough ſenſe of the pleaſures of virtue and religion, we ſhall look upon all our bodily pleaſures as the little toys and fooleries of our inſtant ſtate, with which we pleaſed our childiſh fancies when we knew no better, our minds being for the main reconciled to rational and ſpiritual pleaſures. We ſhall put off all remains of bodily luſts with our bodies, and ſo fly away into the ſpiritual world with none but pure and ſpiritual appetites about us, where meeting with an infinite fulneſs of ſpiritual joys and pleaſures, of which we had many a foretaſte in the body, our pre-diſpoſed mind will preſently cloſe with and ſeed upon them, with ſuch unſpeakable content and ſatisfaction, as will raviſh it for ever from the thoughts of all other pleaſures.

Another of thoſe virtues which belong to a man, conſidered merely as a rational animal, is humility; which conſiſts in a modeſt and lowly opinion of ourſelves, and of our acquisitions, merits, or endowments, or in not valuing ourſelves beyond what is due and juſt, upon the account of any good we are poſſeſſed of, whether it be internal or external. For pride, or an over-weening ſelf-conceit, is the bane of all our virtue and happineſs, as has been ſufficiently ſhewn under its proper article, in the firſt volume of this Ladies Library, to which therefore I muſt refer. We ſhould be ſo far from repining and

murmuring at God, for not rewarding us as liberally as others, that we should be thoroughly sensible that he has been bountiful to us, infinitely beyond our desert or expectation; that it was not out of a fond partiality, or blind respect of persons, that he raised others to higher degrees of glory than ourselves, but out of a principle of strict justice, that exactly balances and adjusts its rewards, according to the degrees of our desert and improvement. The sense of which will not only compose our minds into a perfect satisfaction, but also continually excite us to those beatifical acts of love and praise, thanksgiving and adoration. Thus will humility tune and compose us for heaven, and only cast us down like balls, that we may rebound the higher in glory and happiness.

It is true indeed, the immediate product of this, and all the other virtues already treated of under this head, is only, at least chiefly, privative happiness, or the happiness of rest and indolence, which consists in not being miserable, or in a perfect cessation from all such acts as are hurtful and injurious to a rational spirit.

Now besides this privative, there is a positive part of happiness, which consists not in rest, but in motion, in the vigorous exercise of our rational faculties, upon such objects as are most suitable to them. And to the obtaining of this part of our happiness, there are kinds of virtues necessary to be put in practice, as we are rational creatures; and these are virtues of a divine nature, as the others are of a human.

As we are rational creatures, related to God, we are obliged to think of and contemplate the beauty and perfection of his nature.

For the natural use of our understanding is to contemplate truth; and therefore the more of truth and reality there is in any knowable object, and the farther it is removed from falsehood and non-entity, the more the understanding is concerned to contemplate and think upon it. God therefore being the most true and real object,

as he stands removed by the necessity of his existence from all possibility of non-being, must needs be the most perfect theme of our understanding, the best and greatest subject on which it can employ its meditations. And besides that he is the most true and real of all beings, he is also the source and spring of all truth and reality: His power, conducted by his wisdom and goodness, being the cause not only of all that is, but of all that either shall be or can be. And is it fit that our understanding, which was made to contemplate, should wholly overlook the Fountain of it? But besides this too, that he is the greatest Truth himself, and the Cause of every thing that is true and real, he is the Sovereign of beings, the most amiable and perfect, as he includes in his infinite essence all possible perfection both in kind and degree. And what a monstrous irreverence is it, for minds that were framed to the contemplation of truth, to pass by such a great and glorious one without any regard or observance, as if he stood for a cypher in the world, and were not worthy to be thought upon? He is, besides all this, a Truth, in which, above all others, we are most nearly concerned, as he is not only the Father and Prop of our beings, and the Consolation of our lives, but the sole Arbiter of our fate too, upon whom our everlasting well or ill being depends. And what can we be more concerned to think and meditate upon, than this great Being from whom we sprang, in whom we live and breathe, and from whom we are to expect all the evil or good that we can fear or hope for? All which considered, there is no doubt to be made but that our understanding was chiefly made for God, to look up to him, and contemplate his being and perfections. Till we have thoroughly fixed our minds and wills upon God, we do naturally affect such an infinity of objects, that our desires are always reaching at new pleasures, and carried forth after new possessions; by which the soul declares that it is not to be perfectly pleased with finite truth or good, and that it can never be satisfied but in

union with God, who is an infinite ocean of truth and goodness. For as for all other beings, they are so very shallow, that we quickly see to the very bottom of their truth and reality; and when we have done that, we have no more in them, to feed and entertain our understandings; and when we have exhausted the truth of finite beings, we must either cease to understand any more, which would be to deprive our noblest faculty of any farther pleasure, or we must at last fix our mind upon God, in which it will find such infinite truth as will be sufficient to exercise it throughout all its infinite duration. But unless we do now acquaint our minds with God, by frequent thinking and meditating upon him, we shall by degrees grow such strangers to him, that by that time we go into the other world, we shall be so far from being pleased with contemplating him, that we shall look upon him as an uncouth object, and out of distaste avert and turn our eyes from him. We shall be continually flying away from him, as bats and owls do from the light of the sun, and never be able to compose our awkward thoughts into a fixed contemplation of his glory. And when we have thus banished ourselves from the only object that can for ever bless and satisfy our understanding, that can keep it in everlasting exercise and motion, and feed its greedy thoughts eternally with fresh and glorious discoveries, we have utterly lost one of the sweetest pleasures that human nature is capable of, and so must necessarily pine and languish under an eternal discontentedness.

Though to meditate closely upon God may at first be irksome and tedious to our unexperienced minds, yet when by the constant practice of it we have worn off that strangeness towards God, which renders the thoughts of him so troublesome to us, and by frequent converses are grown better acquainted with him, we shall be by degrees so pleased and satisfied with the thoughts of him, that we shall not know how to live without them; and our minds at last will be touched with such a lively sense
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of his attractive beauties, that we shall never be well but while we are with him. He will thus become the constant companion of our thoughts, and the daily theme of our meditations. Nothing in the world will then be so grateful and acceptable to us, as to retire now and then from it, and converse with God in holy contemplation. And though by reason of our present circumstances and necessities there is no remedy, but our thoughts must be often diverted from him, and forced to attend to our secular occasions; yet after they have been used a while to God, we shall find they will never be so well pleased, nor so much at ease, as when they are retired from every thing but God, and composed and settled into divine meditations. When we go into the other world, where we shall be removed from these troublesome circumstances and necessities which did here so often divert our thoughts from God, our minds, which have been so long accustomed and habituated to him, will immediately fasten upon him, and entirely devote themselves to the contemplation of his nature and glory. For our minds being already strongly inclined, and biased towards God, by those grateful foretastes we have had of him in the warmths of our meditation; we come into the still and quiet regions of the blessed, where we shall immediately have a more close and intimate view of him than ever, all our thoughts will naturally run towards him, and be so captivated with the first sight of his glory, that we shall never be able to look off again as long as eternity endures; but one view will invite us to another; and what we see will so transport and ravish us, that we shall still desire to see farther and farther.

Oh happy mind! what tongue can express the joys and raptures, that being thus in conjunction with God, art always filled with glorious ideas, and compassed round with the wonders of his perfection? At every glance thou seest some new charms, with every thought makest some vast discovery! Oh! the transporting pleasures of

that blessed vision, which I can now hardly think of without ecstacy! With what delight will my winged thoughts hover in the light of God's countenance, which through every moment of eternity will be still revealing new beauties to us, such as will not only for ever employ, but for ever inflame our meditations.

As we are rational creatures, related to God, we are not only obliged to think of and contemplate him, but also humbly to worship and adore him.

Out of a most awful esteem, and most profound reverence of his super-excellent Majesty, and boundless perfection, we should bow down our souls before him, and address ourselves to him by invocation and prayer, by praise and thanksgiving, as to the all-sufficient, independent, and sole Disposer of every good and perfect gift. And in these our addresses we should outwardly express this our reverential esteem of him, by such humble gestures of body as are most apt to testify it to others. Of this duty we have discoursed in the foregoing pages, and shall take occasion to speak farther in those that follow. If we are of the elect, it will eternally be our business and employment to admire and extol the perfections of God, of which he will every moment make new and glorious discoveries; and to celebrate with grateful acknowledgments the infinite riches of his bounty, of which we will every moment have fresh and sweet experiences. Thus, while by continual acts of praise and thanksgiving we endeavour to affect our minds with a due sense of the goodness and bounty of God, we are practising beforehand the music of heaven, and taking out the songs of Sion, that so, when we go from hence, we may be qualified and prepared to bear a part in the celestial choir. True devotion consists in a quick and lively sense of the infinite majesty, beauty, and benignity of God, and most effectually disposes the mind to all those divine and spiritual exercises in which the state of heaven consists.

As we are rational creatures, related to God, we are also obliged to an unfeigned love of and complacency in him.

And this obligation lies from us to him, both on the account of what he is in himself, the most amiable of beings, in whom there is an harmonious concurrence of all imaginable beauties and perfections, of wisdom and goodness, of justice and mercy, and every other amiable thing that can claim or attract a reasonable affection; (all which, in infinite degrees, are contempered together in his nature) and also on account of his infinite kindness and beneficence to us, in the many instances mentioned in every article of this design.

If ever we intend to grow up to the state of the blessed in heaven, we must endeavour to kindle and blow up the love of God in our hearts. In order to this, we must be frequently representing to our minds the infinite reason we have to love him, and pressing it upon ourselves with the vast obligations he has laid upon us, spreading them fairly before our thoughts in all their endearing circumstances. We must ever and anon set our cold and frozen souls before those melting flames of his love and beauty, and never leave urging and pressing them with this consideration, till we feel the heavenly fire begin to kindle in our bosoms. Above all things, we must take care, by the constant practice of what is agreeable to God's nature, to reconcile our minds and tempers to him; for, till this is done, we can never be habitually pleased or delighted in him. But when once, by the practice of those eternal rules of goodness that are founded in his blessed nature, we have so far reconciled our natures to him, as that our hearts and his stand bent the same way, and are for the main alike inclined and disposed; then we are prepared for, and made proper and convenient fuel to receive this heavenly flame of love from him. And when this is once so thoroughly kindled in our hearts, as that we are habitually well-pleased and delighted in him, so as to rejoice in his happiness, acquiesce in his will, and meditate on his beauty

and goodness with an unfeigned complacency of soul, we are then in the same state in kind, though not in degree, with the blessed people in heaven,

And how inconceivably happy will that glorious state be, when we shall always live in view of the most lovely object; and always love him as much as we are able, and be able to love him a thousand times more than we can now imagine? For the longer we view, the more shall we know him; and the more we know him, the better we shall love him. Thus through everlasting ages our love shall be stretching and extending itself upon this infinite beauty and loveliness; he will never be absent from us, but continually entertaining our amorous minds with the prospect of his infinite beauties; we shall ever feel his love to us in the most sensible and endearing effects, even in the glory of that crown which he will set upon our heads; and in the ravishing sweetness of those joys he will infuse into our hearts: We shall then experience the continuation of his love in the continual fruition of all that an everlasting heaven means; and be convinced as well by the perpetuity of his goodness to us, as by the immutability of his nature, that he is an unchangeable lover. In a word, we shall there find him a most happy Being, happy beyond our vastest wishes of his love: we shall not only delight in him, as he is infinitely lovely and amiable, but rejoice and triumph in him too, as he is infinitely blessed and happy; for love unites the interests as well as the hearts of lovers, and mutually appropriates them to each other's joys and felicities: We shall in that state of blessedness share in the felicity of God, proportionably to the degree of our love to him: for the more we love him, the more we shall still espouse his interest; and the more we are interested in his happiness, the happier we must be, and the more we must enjoy of it.

Thus God's happiness is, as it were, the common bank and treasury of all divine lovers, in which they have every one a share, and of which, proportionably to the degrees

gress of their love to him, they do actually participate to all eternity. Could they but love him as much as he deserves, that is, infinitely, they would be as infinitely blessed and happy as he; for then all his happiness would be theirs, and they would have the same delightful sense and feeling of it, as if it were all transplanted into their own bosoms. God therefore being an infinitely happy, infinitely loving, and infinitely lovely Being, when once we are admitted to dwell for ever in his blessed presence, our love to him can be productive of nothing but sweet and ravishing emotions; for the immense perfections it will then find in its object must necessarily rescue it from all those fears and jealousies, griefs and displeasures, that are mingled with our carnal loves, and render it a pure delight and complacency. When once it is grown up to the perfection of the heavenly state, it will be all heaven, it will be an eternal paradise of delights in us, a living spring, whence rivers of pleasures will issue for evermore. Oh! blessed state, in which my heart shall be brimful of love, and my love shall triumph alone with me, and be all joy and rapture; being removed for ever out of the noise and neighbourhood of all these disquieting affections, which here are wont to mingle with, and continually disturb and incommode it.

As we are rational creatures, related to God, we are farther obliged attentively to imitate him in all his imitable perfections and actions.

It is an allowed maxim, that that which is most perfect in its kind, is to be the rule and measure of all those individual natures that are contained under it: God therefore being the most perfect of all in the whole kind of reasonable beings, must needs be the supreme pattern of all those individuals that are under him; and so far as any of them disagree from him, so far are they defective in their natures. God is the archetype of every reasonable creature, and man is his imitation and image: for he is a being that is infinitely reasonable in all his volitions and

actions; that has not the least intermixture either of humour or folly, or prejudices in his choices, but is always and in every thing governed by his own pure and all-comprehending wisdom. Upon which account he ought to be owned, looked upon by every reasonable being, as the sovereign standard and pattern of their natures, and so far as any reasonable nature moves or acts counter to his, so far it ought to be looked upon as monstrous and unnatural in its kind: And as it is monstrous in a human body to have its parts displaced, its mouth opened in his belly, or its legs growing out of his shoulders, because these are unnatural positions, which are directly contrary to the true idea, form, and figure of a human body; so every reasonable nature that does not imitate and take after God's, but chooses and acts contrary to him, is so far monstrous and misshapen, because it is writhed and distorted into a figure that is directly contrary to its natural pattern and exemplar: while it continues so, it is not capable of true happiness; ~~for that~~ which renders God so infinitely happy in himself is not so much the almighty power he has to defend himself from foreign hurts and injuries, as the exact agreement of all his motions and actions with the all-comprehending reason of his own mind.

In prosecution of this great design, which is to make us happy, the Gospel strictly requires us to be always imitating, so far as they are imitable, the perfections and actions of our heavenly Father; to endeavour to form our natures to his, to rectify the features and lineaments of our souls by his most amiable idea; to be continually framing our temper by the noble pattern of his mercy and goodness, his justice, purity, and wisdom; that so, being new-cast as it were in the perfect mould of his nature, we may be transformed into living images of him. "Be ye therefore," says the apostle, imitators, or "followers of God, as dear children." Again, "Be pure as God is pure, merciful as he is merciful, and perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." And in another place, "Put on
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“ the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

What an infinite satisfaction must that give to the mind, when surveying itself round about, it shall find every thing within itself exactly as it ought to be, every faculty, to its utmost power and capacity, perfectly corresponding with its original pattern and exemplar. And when it shall interchangeably turn its eyes from God to itself; and compare grace with grace, and feature with feature, and perceive what amiable consent and agreement there is between its own copy and his fair original; what a pure imitation of God its life is, and how exactly deform all its motions and actions are? When, I say, our blessed minds shall always find themselves in this godly posture and condition, oh! what incomparable content and satisfaction will they take in themselves? With what ravishing pleasure will they ever review their own motions, which being immediately copied from the nature of God, will be such as its severest reason will be always forced to commend and approve? How will the happy mind be then always triumphing in its own purity, and enjoy within itself an everlasting heaven of content and peace? How will it continually be crowned with the applauses of its own reason? All its actions will have the joyful echoes of a well-pleased conscience, continually resounding after them. Thus, by imitating God's perfections, we shall imitate his happiness too, and shall for ever take after him, not only in respect of the rectitude of our natures, but also in the most blessed and comfortable enjoyment of ourselves. Besides that, our resemblance of God will everlastingly dispose us to love, and our love to contemplate and adore him; for all these blessed acts do reciprocally further and promote each other; just like contiguous bodies, that are placed in a circle, the first of which being moved, thrusts on the second, the second the third, and the third the last, if there be no more between, and then the last thrust on the first, and

so round again in the same order. If we carry therefore with us into eternity, a frame and disposition of nature like God's, we shall always so imitate as still to love him, so love as still to contemplate him, so contemplate as still to adore him, so adore, as still to imitate, and love, and contemplate him anew.

As we are reasonable creatures, related to God, we are bound to resign up, and submit ourselves to his blessed will and disposal.

For God has a just dominion over all, founded in his own infinite power, that does not, like other dominions, result to him from any external acts or achievements, but is the eternal prerogative of his own nature. For he, as well as all other beings, has a freedom to exercise his own abilities, so far as it is just and lawful; but being infinitely paramount to all other powers whatsoever, he can be subject to no superior authority, nor consequently be obliged by any other law but that of his own nature. Whatever he can do, he can do justly; if it be not contrary to the infinite perfections of his nature; for his power being infinite and unconfined, as well as his wisdom, justice, and goodness, does sufficiently warrant him to do whatsoever is consistent with them; otherwise he would be infinitely powerful in vain: And therefore, since he can exercise a dominion over all, he must needs have an eternal right to do it, so far as his own wisdom, justice, and goodness will permit, which are the only laws by which he can be bounded, in the exercise of his infinite power and ability; and therefore while he governs us by such rules and laws as are convenient to his own nature, his own greatness and power, which exalts him above all other laws or authority, sufficiently warrants him so to do: And being thus rightfully enthroned, by the infinite pre-eminence of his own power and majesty, all other beings, so far as they are capable, stand immutably obliged to submit and resign themselves up to his government.

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* But besides that we are obliged to him as he is God, we are also bound to him as he is our creator. For there is always a power acquired by benefits, where there is none antecedently, especially where the benefit conferred is no less than that of our being, which is the case between us and God. And this is such a benefit, as is sufficient to entitle him to us, by an absolute and unalienable property, tho' he had no antecedent right of dominion over us by virtue of his infinite greatness. Before he created us, or any other being, he had free power to act any thing that lay within the compass of just and lawful; which just and lawful was not definable by any other law but that of his own nature; and tho' since his creation his power is not more; yet doubtless by giving us our beings, he has laid new obligations upon us to obey him. For now, deriving ourselves as we do, from him, we are bound by all the ties of equity and justice, to render back ourselves to him, and to submit those powers to his dominion, which are the effects and offspring of his bounty. For what can be more just and equal, than that will which is the cause of our beings, should be the law and rule of our actions; than that we should serve him with those powers we derived from him, and render him back the fruits of his own plantation; For now we are not our own but God's, and he alone has power to dispose of us. Whenever we dispose of ourselves contrary to his will and pleasure, we do not only invade his property, but employ the spoils of it against him; and while we continue thus doing, it is not possible we should ever be happy. For besides that while we continue in rebellion against him, we are in actual confederacy with hell: (rebellion being as the sin of witchcraft) rebels against God are, like witches, in league with the devil, which is the genuine comment on this text. Such rebels are listed volunteers under those infernal powers, who for blowing the trumpet of rebellion in heaven were banished thence six thousand years ago, and have ever since been raising forces in this lower world
against

against God; and all who are confederates with them, will partake of their portion in the lake, that burns with unquenchable fire to all eternity.

It cannot be supposed that the wise sovereign of the world should be so unconcerned for his own authority, as to suffer his creatures to spurn and affront it, without manifesting his displeasure against them, in some dire and sensible effects. And when once he is implacably set against us, he will more or less let loose his power upon us, and make us feel his wrathful resentments, by infusing supernatural horrors into our souls, and scourging our guilty and defenceless spirits with inspirations of dire and frightful thoughts. God has imprinted a dread of his own power and majesty, so deeply on our natures, that we are not able, with all our arts of self-deceit, wholly to obliterate and deface it: And tho' in this life we may sometimes suppress and stupify our sense of God, yet even here, in spite of ourselves, it will ever and anon be returning upon us. If when we have done what we know is offensive to that invisible majesty we stand in awe of, we do but suffer ourselves seriously to reflect upon it, there presently arises in our minds a swarm of horrid thoughts and dismal expectations. And if in this present state, in which we have so many salves for our wounded spirits, so many pleasures and self-delusions to charm our natural dread of God, our over-charged consciences do notwithstanding recoil upon us, and alarm us with such dismal bodings, what will they do hereafter, when all those pleasures are removed, and all those self-delusions basted with which we were wont to sooth and divert them? We shall then doubtless be continually stung with sharp and dire reflexions, and our consciences, like tragick scenes, be all hung round with the ensigns of horror. Then shall the dread of God perpetually haunt us like a grim fury, and the terror of his offended majesty strike us into an everlasting trembling and agony; for the "devils themselves believe and tremble:" The same will be our lot, if we go into the other world ha-
bitual

bitual rebels to God: Our deep and inveterate malice against him, will still hurry us to incense and provoke him; and then our natural dread of his power and majesty will break into frightful and horrible thoughts, and so be continually revenging upon us, those our continual provocation, of him. Our sense of our unlikeness to him will ever fill us with shame and confusion, and that of our rebellion against him, continually strike us into fear and amazement.

To prevent which, our holy religion, which does so industriously consult our happiness, requires us now to "submit ourselves to God, to live to God, to present ourselves living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, to yield ourselves unto God, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God." By all which is to be understood, that we should endeavour so to affect our minds with the sense of God's authority over us, and the manifold reasons of our obedience to him, as to be firmly and constantly resolved within ourselves, neither to chuse any thing that he forbids, nor to refuse any thing that he commands; that we should set him up a throne in our hearts, a fixed and prevailing resolution of obedience, that herein he may sit and reign, and have the absolute empire of all our inward motions and outward actions. In a word, that we should acquire such an habitual respect to, and reverence of his sovereign authority, that no temptation from within or without us may be able to countermand it, or to seduce us from our duty, into any wilful course of rebellion against him. And when once we have framed our mind into this obediential temper, we are in a forward preparation for heaven.

By being thus reduced to a perfect submission to the will of God, we shall therein find ourselves incomparably happy. Our wills being always determined by the will of God, we shall be perfectly eased of all the trouble and distraction of chusing. Our mind will no longer hover in suspense, nor be divided between contrary reasons,
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but all its thoughts will glide gently on, in a calm and quiet channel, without ever being tossed and bandied to and fro, by cross and opposite deliberations. It will no sooner know the will of God, but it will rest in it immediately, with a free assent and uncontrolled approbation. It will, upon new occasions, be free from the trouble of forming new choices, and resolutions, being already fixed, under all events, to one steady course of motion; and immoveably resolved, whatever befalls, ever to do what God would have it. Our will, thus perfectly acquiescing in God, as in its proper place and element, will no longer dispute, as it was wont to do, no longer waver between two loadstones; but always obey upon the first motion, and follow him for ever without deliberation. In which happy state we shall be no longer ground between those countermoving millstones, the law in our minds, and the law in our members; but being entirely resigned to God, we shall obey him with a full current of inclination. What a mighty ease must this be to the soul, especially considering, that by being thus entirely subject to God, it will not only be released from the trouble of deliberating and chusing, but also thoroughly warranted of the goodness and rectitude of its own choices? For so far as we are subject to God, our wills are his, and so are our actions too; and while they are so, we can have no reason to mistrust that they are bad in themselves, or that he is angry and displeased at them. And whereas, rebellious souls are perpetually haunted with two restless furies, the shame of their guilt; and the fear of their danger, which even here give them more disturbance than all their sins can give them pleasure and delight; when once we are perfectly subject to God, we shall be for ever discharged of them both, and then will our happy minds be always as courageous as truth; and as confident as innocence itself.

As by our perfect submission to God, we shall be wholly released from fears and doubts, and sufficiently warranted in our own choices, so we shall be abundantly satisfied,

satisfied, both of the wisdom and success of them. For then we shall be assured, by a sweet and happy experience, that whatever God commands us to do, he most certainly knows that it is for our good, and that that is the reason why he commands it. While we chuse what God would have us, ~~our~~ ^{our} wills are guided by his wisdom; and so in every genuine act of obedience, we are as infallible as omniscience itself. When therefore we are perfectly resigned to God, we shall always will and act, with as much confidence and assurance of a happy and prosperous success, as if we ourselves were infinitely wise, and had a perfect comprehension of all possible issues and events. And while wretched rebels grope about under the conduct of their own blind wills, and for the most part do they know not what, and go they know not where themselves, but live by chance, and act at random; our wills and actions being wholly steered by an all-wise will, which never fails to measure them by the best rules, and point them to the best ends; we shall always proceed upon the most certain grounds, and be infallibly assured, that every thing we will or do shall conspire to our good.

And whereas when men know not what may happen upon such an action, and are not able to pry out all those hidden events which lurk in the womb of their own designs, they always act with caution and anxiety, and are doubtful and tremulous in their motions; when once we are sure of a good event, we still go on with courage and cheerfulness, and so we shall ever do, when we ever perfectly will and act under the command of God: For we shall then see all good issues before us; and be firmly assured from that infallible wisdom which governs his will, and by his ours, that every thing we will or do shall be crowned with a happy effect. And this will for ever wing our souls with an unwearied vigour and activity, and render each act of our obedience, unspeakably sweet and delightful to us. And now, oh! blessed mind! what tongue or thought can reach

reach thy happiness? who living in a most perfect subjection to an all-good, and all-wise will, are never in the least concerned or troubled, to debate and deliberate what to chuse; but dost everlastingly embrace and follow what an infinite goodness and an infinite wisdom has chosen for thee?

As we are reasonable creatures, related to God, we are obliged not only to resign our wills intirely up to his, but chearfully to trust in, and depend upon him, for he is the prop and center of all the mouldering creation: The almighty Atlas that bears it upon his shoulders, and keeps it from sinking into ruin: We, and every creature in heaven and earth hang upon him; and if he shakes us off but for a moment, we presently drop into nothing and perish. For could we exist of ourselves this present moment, we might as well have done so the moment before, and may as well do so the moment after, and so backwards and forwards to all eternity; and unless we had such a fulness of essence in us, as to exist of ourselves from all eternity past, to all eternity to come; it is impossible we should exist so much as one moment, without new supplies from the infinite and independent fountain of being. And what can be more fit and reasonable, than that we who are thus born up by him, should freely trust in, and depend upon him; that we should build our hope upon the prop of our existence, and make him the stay of our confidence; "in whom we live, and move, and have our being;" especially, considering what a proper object of truth and dependence he is, and that not only as he is the sovereign disposer of all those issues and events which concern us, but also as he is infinitely wise, and always understands what is good or hurtful to us, and as he stands engaged, both by his own essential goodness and free promise, never to fail those that put their trust in him; but to manage all their affairs to their eternal interest and advantage. And in whom can we more rationally confide, than in a being of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power? that
always

always knows what is best for us, that always wills what he knows to be so, and always does what he wills.

How extremely unfit are we to make choices for ourselves, since in most particulars it is almost an equality, whether what we chuse will prove our food or our poison!

But now, God being the supreme orderer and disposer of things, and having the first link of every chain of causes in his own hands, must needs have an intire comprehension of all the intermediate ones, from the beginning to the end; and his power being not only the cause of all actual events, but also of the possibility of those that shall never be actual, he must needs discern the utmost issues and concomitants of every possible, as well as of every future event, and perfectly understand, not only what will be beneficial and injurious to us, but also what might be. Thus it is impossible for him to be mistaken in his choice, because he knows well beforehand, what things would be so, if they were, as what they are, when they do actually exist. Upon the whole therefore, it is doubtless of inestimable advantage to us, to be in the hands of God: And next to hell itself, I know nothing is more formidable than for God to let us alone, and give us up to our own wills and desires. And should he call to us from heaven, and tell us that he was resolved to cross our desires no more, but to comply with all our wishes, let the event prove good or bad, we should have just reason to look upon ourselves as the most forlorn and abandoned creatures on this side hell, as persons excluded from the greatest blessing that belongs to a creature: And if we had any hope of his re-acceptance of us, it would be infinitely our interest to resign back ourselves, and all our concerns, to him, and on our bended knees to beseech him above all things, not to leave us to ourselves, or throw us from his care and conduct. It being therefore, upon all accounts, so highly fit and reasonable, and so much our interest and advantage, that we should
freely

freely trust ourselves, and all our affairs, into the hands of God, and depend upon him for the good success of all our honest endeavours and undertakings, that we should acquiesce in his disposal of things, and under all outward events be pleased and satisfied with his conduct, as knowing that however things may happen to us, they cannot be otherwise than as the wise and good God is pleased either to permit, or to order and determine them: This, I say, being so fit in itself, and so much for our interest, it is impossible that without it we can ever be happy here or hereafter.

When we consider what a mighty stake we have in his hands, how all our fortunes lie at his feet, and how easily he can frown us into nothing, or spurn us into a condition ten thousand times worse than nothing, whenever he pleases; how can we be otherwise secure in our own minds, or avoid being extremely anxious or solicitous, but by firmly relying on his truth and goodness: To the want of which is to be attributed all that carking care, tormenting fear, and disquieting thoughts, which perpetually haunt the minds of men; and from these thorny disquietudes it is impossible they should ever be wholly free, no not in heaven itself, 'till they have wrought their minds to a perfect trust and confidence in God. For we shall be altogether as dependent upon God for our heavenly, as we are for our earthly happiness; because, tho' all those acts of heavenly virtue, in which our heavenly happiness consists, will be much more in our own power than any of these worldly goods are, yet they will be no longer in our power than God shall think fit to enable us to chuse and act, and to support us in our being and existence, which then we shall sensibly perceive intirely depends upon the all-enlivening vigour of his vital breath. And therefore tho' he has promised to continue our being in that most blessed state for ever; yet unless we perfectly trust in his veracity, our minds will be continually disturbed with anxious and misgiving thoughts:

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We shall be afraid lest one time or other he should forget his promise, and upon some unknown reason or emergency withdraw from us that influence of his upholding power, upon which our being and well-being depends, and let us drop into nothing. And the greater our happiness is, the more we shall be afraid to lose it; because we should always be sensible that it intirely depends upon the pleasure of God, whose truth and goodness we cannot perfectly confide in. From all which considerations it is plain, that if we were plac'd in the midst of heaven, with a misgiving distrustful mind of God; that would imbitter all the joys of it, and give them a harsh and ungrateful farewell. For the fearful apprehensions we should continually have of being thrust out of heaven again, and tumbled headlong from all glory, would be such a continual affliction to us, that we should even pine away our happy eternity for fear of being eternally deprived of it. So impossible it is for any dependent being to be happy, without an intire trust and confidence in God, upon whom its being and happiness depend.

There are many places of the gospel that teach us this intire confidence in God: "Commit the keeping of your souls to God in well-doing," says St. Peter. "Trust in the living God, who giveth all things richly to enjoy," says St. Paul. And again, "Do not trust in yourselves, but in God, who raiseth the dead." All which, and much more to the same purpose, is said to press and engage us to a constant and cheartful reliance upon God, and to endeavour to affect our minds with a deep sense of his over-ruling providence, and a full assurance of the goodness of all those great designs he is driving on in the world; and accordingly to acquiesce in and embrace all events, as the token of his love and favour, and always to live upon this persuasion, that it is infinitely better for us to be in God's hands than in our own, and that he knows much better how to dispose of us and our affairs than we do, and that he will take care to dispose of them.

as much to our advantage as we ourselves should, if we knew as much as he does.

Now tho' by reason of those strong impressions which sensible things in this life of sense make upon us, we should not always be able so firmly to rely upon and repose ourselves in God's invincible power, as not to be at all disquieted about the issues and events of things; yet, if by frequent acts of trust and reliance on him, we have so disposed our minds to confide in him, as that by looking up to his over-ruling providence, we can ordinarily stay and support ourselves amidst the changes and revolutions of this world: If when a storm of adversity hangs lowring over, or showers down upon us, we can fly to God for shelter, and promise ourselves safety and protection under the out-stretched wing of his providence: In a word, if when we sinart, we can ordinarily hope in him, and rest persuaded that under his gracious conduct and disposal of things shall work together for our good; this our imperfect wavering hope and dependence shall, in the other life, be immediately ripened into a most perfect confidence and assurance. For though our condition will be ever dependent, yet will it be ever dependent upon such a foundation as can no more fail than God's own life and being; no less than his veracity and goodness, both which are so essential to him, as that he cannot exist without them. And knowing ourselves so firmly secured in this our dependent state, as that we can never sink, unless God himself sink under us, we shall be to all eternity, not only as safe but as satisfied in it as if we were every one a God to himself; and in this blessed security we shall quietly enjoy God and ourselves for ever. Thus will our trust and confidence in him crown the pleasure of all our other virtues, by giving us full security of an everlasting fruition. The ravished mind will now have no fear or distrust to cramp or arrest it in its blessed operations, no anxious thoughts of a sad insecurity to sour its present enjoyments, but will enjoy all heaven every

every moment, in a fearless security of enjoying it all for ever; and when it shall perfectly love, contemplate, and adore God with a sure and certain confidence of contemplating, loving and adoring him perfectly for ever, oh how unspeakably will this enhance the pleasure of those beatifical acts! For now in every moment of our blessed eternity, we shall still have the joy of a blessed eternity to come. And besides all those pleasures which each present moment of our heavenly life shall abound with, we shall still have the pleasure of a prospect of infinite ages of pleasure. And thus the blessed mind, by its perfect dependence on God, consummates its own heaven, and secures itself for ever in a most quiet and undisturbed enjoyment.

The delight which a good christian cannot but take in considering so nearly the perfection of his life and happiness, both in this world and the next, will take away the tediousness of reflexions too apt to disgust worldly minds that bend always to this earth, and have not spirit enough to soar ever so little up towards heaven. To these they are not addressed; but even for these too one must have some consideration; and in treating in the next place of the social virtues, they may, I hope, be led to consider the divine with less impatience.

Man, of all sublunary creatures, is most adapted to society; for though the greatest part of other creatures do covet society as well as he, yet he alone is furnished with the gift of nature which renders society the most pleasant and useful, and that is the gift of speech: By means of which we can express our thoughts, maintain a mutual intelligence of minds one with another, and thereby divert our sorrows, mingle our mirth, impart our secrets, communicate our counsels, and make mutual compacts and agreements to supply and assist each other. And in these things consists the greatest pleasure and use of society. As of all creatures we are most fitted for society, so we stand in the greatest need of it: For as for other creatures, after they come into the world, they
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are much sooner able to help themselves than we ; and after we are most able to help ourselves, there are a world of necessities and conveniencies, without which we cannot be happy, and with which we cannot be supplied without each other's aid and assistance, which in an unsociable state of life we should, of all creatures in the world, be the most indisposed to render one another. As a man in his perfect state is the best of all animals, so separated from law and right he is the worst: For out of society we see his nature perfectly degenerates, and instead of being inclined to assist, grows almost most savage and barbarous to his own kind. Since therefore we have so much need of each other's help, society is absolutely necessary to cherish and preserve in us our natural benevolence towards one another; without which, instead of being mutually helpful, we should be mutually mischievous. For he that cannot contract society with others, or thro' his own self sufficiency does not need it, belongs not to any commonwealth, but is either a wild beast or a God. We being therefore so framed for society, and under such necessities of entering into it, it hence necessarily follows, that being associated together, we are all obliged in our several ranks and stations so to behave ourselves toward one another, as is most for the common good of all ; and that since the happiness of each particular member of our society, redounds from the welfare of the whole, and is involved in it, we ought to esteem nothing good for ourselves that is a nuisance to the publick, because whatever it suffers, I and every man suffer ; and unless I could be happy alone, that can never be for my interest in particular that is against my interest in common. Now in such a natural behaviour as most conduces to our common benefit and happiness, as we are in society one with another, consists all social virtue, the proper use and design of which is to preserve our society with one another, and to render it a common blessing.

As rational creatures associated, and so related to one another, we are obliged to be kindly and charitably disposed towards one another: For the end of our society being mutually to aid and assist one another, it is necessary in order thereunto, that we should every one be kind and benevolent to every one, that so we may be continually inclined mutually to aid, and to do good offices to one another. So far as we fall short of this, we fall short of the end of our society. The less we love one another, the less prone we shall be to promote each other's welfare; and consequently the less advantage we shall reap from our mutual society. But if instead of loving, we malign and hate each other, our society will be so far from contributing to our happiness, that it will be only a means of rendering us more miserable. For it will only furnish us with more frequent opportunities of doing mischief to one another; and that mutual intercourse we shall have by being united together in society, will supply us with greater means and occasions to wreak our spite upon each other. For society puts us within each other's reach; and by that means, if we are enemies, renders us more dangerous to one another; like two adverse armies, which when they are at a distance can do but little hurt, but when they are joined and mingled, never want opportunities to destroy and butcher one another. Thus hatred and malice render our society a plague, and we had much better live apart poorly and solitarily, and withdraw from one another as beasts of prey do, into their separate dens, than continue in one another's reach, and be always liable, as we must be while we are in society, to be baited and worried by one another.

And as hatred and malice spoil all our society in this life, and render it worse than the most dismal solitude, so they will also in the other; for whenever the souls of men leave their bodies, they doubtless flock to the birds of their own feather, and consort themselves with such separate spirits as are of their own genius and

temper. For, besides that good and bad spirits are by the eternal laws of the other world distributed into two separate nations, and there live apart from one another, having no other communication or intercourse but what is between two hostile countries, that are continually designing and attempting one against another; besides this, I say, likeness does naturally congregate beings, and incline them to associate with their own kind. Now rancour and malice are the proper characters of the devil, and the natural genius of hell; and, consequently, it is by a malicious temper of mind that we are naturalized beforehand subjects of the kingdom of darkness, and qualified for the conversation of furies. And when we go from hence into eternity, this our malignant genius will render us utterly averse to the friendly society of heaven, and naturally press and incline us to consort with that wretched nation of spiteful and rancorous spirits, with whom we are already joined by a likeness and communion of nature. But, oh! much better were it for us to be shut up all alone in some dark hole of the world, where we might converse only with our own melancholy thoughts, and never hear of any other being but ourselves, than to be continually placed with such vexatious company. For though we who are spectators only of corporeal action, cannot discern the manner how one spirit acts upon another, yet there is no doubt but spiritual agents can strike as immediately upon spirits as bodily agents can upon bodies; and supposing that these can mutually act upon one another, there is no more doubt but that they can mutually make each other feel each other's pleasures and displeasures, and that, according as they are more or less powerful, they can more or less aggrieve and afflict one another. And what can be expected from a company of malicious spiteful spirits, joined in society together, but that their conversation should be a continual intercourse of mutual mischiefs and vexations? Especially considering how they have laid the foundation of an eternal quarrel one against another.

another. For there all those companions in sin will meet, who by their ill counsels, wicked imaginations, and sad examples, did mutually contribute to each other's ruin; and being met in such a woeful state, how will the tormenting sense of those irreparable injuries they have done each other whet their fury against, and incite them to play the devils one with another! And what can be expected from such a company of waspish beings, so implacably incensed against one another, but that being shut up together in the infernal den, they should be perpetually hissing at and stinging each other? And besides these mutual plagues, which these furious spirits must be supposed to inflict upon one another, they will be also nakedly exposed to the powerful malice of the devils, those fierce executioners of God's righteous vengeance; who, as we now find by experience, have power to suggest black and horrid thoughts to us, and to torture our souls with such dreadful imaginations, as are far more sharp and exquisite than any bodily torments. And since they have such power over us, when God thinks fit to let them loose, what will they have hereafter, when our wretched spirits shall be wholly abandoned to their will, and they shall have free scope to exercise their fury upon us, and glut their hungry mouths with our griefs and vexations? It seems, at least, a mighty probable notion, that that horrid agony of our saviour in the garden, which caused him to shriek and sweat as it were great drops of blood, was chiefly the effect of those preternatural terrors which the devils, with whom he was then contending, impressed upon his innocent mind. And if they had so much power over his pure and mighty soul, that was so strongly aided with the most perfect and unspotted virtues, what will they have over ours, when we are abandoned to them, and thrown as preys into their mouths? With what a hellish rage will they fly upon our guilty and timorous souls, in which there is so much tinder for their injected sparks of horror to take fire on?

Since therefore rancour and malice do so naturally incline and hurry our souls towards the wretched society of devils and damned spirits, the Gospel, which so industriously consults our happiness, takes all possible care, as has been before observed, to train us up in charity and mutual love: It obliges us to bear an universal goodwill to all, and to take an hearty complacency in all that are truly lovely; to be ready to contribute to, and rejoice in every one's welfare, and to live in the continual exercise of all those charitable offices which have been enlarged upon in treating of the virtue of charity. To be courteous and affable, and to treat all those we converse with, with an obliging look, a gentle deportment, and endearing language: To be long-suffering, mild, and easy to be intreated, not to break forth into rage and storm upon every provocation; and when we are justly provoked, not to suffer our displeasure to fester into malice and rancour, but to be forward and easy to be reconciled: To be of a compassionate and sympathizing temper, and to rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep; to be candid interpreters of men and their actions, to be ready to mitigate and excuse their faults, and put fair comments on their actions, to be so far from making malicious glosses on their innocent meaning, from proclaiming their miscarriages, and rejoicing in their falls, as not to believe ill of them, but upon undeniable evidence; and when we are forced to do so, to pity and lament them, and endeavour, and pray, and hope for their reformation. In short, to be benign and bountiful to the necessitous and distressed, and to endeavour, according to our abilities, to allay their sorrows, remove their oppressions, support them under their calamities, and counsel them in their doubts; to be ready to every good work, and like fields of spices, to be scattering our perfumes through all the neighbourhood; and all this out of an honest sincere purpose to promote their good, and not merely to acquire to ourselves a popular vogue and reputation: All which are essential parts of
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that charity, which the Gospel enjoins us to exercise towards one another ; of which enough has been said in the first volume under its proper head.

As we are rational creatures, related to one another, we are obliged to be just and righteous in all our intercourse with one another ; to yield to every one whatsoever by any kind of right, whether natural or acquired, he can demand or challenge of us : for there are some things to which every man has a right by nature, as he is a part and member of human society. As for instance, life, which is the principal of all our actions and perceptions, is freely lent us by God, who is the Source and Fountain of life ; and consequently till God resumes his loan, or we forfeit it by our own actions, we have all a natural right to live ; and for any man to attempt to deprive us of our life, or our means of living, is the highest injury and injustice. Again, words being instituted for no other end but to signify our meaning, and to be the instrument of our intercourse and society with one another, every one who is a member of human society has a right to have our meaning truly signified to him by our words ; and whosoever lies or equivocates to another, does injuriously deprive him of the natural right of society. Again, a good name being the ground of trust and credit, and credit the main sinew of society, till men have forfeited their good name, they have a natural right to be well reputed and spoken of ; and whoever, either by false witness, publick slander, or private whisperings, endeavours to attain an innocent man's reputation, does thereby injuriously attempt to exclude him from the conversation of men, and shut the door of human society against him. Once more, promises being the great security of our mutual intercourse and society with one another, every man that has a right to society, has a right to what another promises him, provided it be lawful and possible ; and therefore to promise what he intends not to perform, or to go back from his promise, when he lawfully may and can perform it, is

an act of unjust rapine ; and I may every whit as honestly rob another man of what is his without my promise, as of what I have made his by it, he having an equal right to both, by fundamental laws of society. In fine, the great design of our society being to help and assist one another, every man has a right to be aided and assisted by every one with whom he has any dealing or intercourse, to have some share of the benefit of all that exchange, traffick, and commerce, which passes between him and others ; and therefore for any man, in his dealings with others, to take advantage from their necessity or ignorance, to oppress or over-reach them, or to deal so hardly by them, as either not to allow them any share of the profit which accrues from their dealings, or not a sufficient share for them to subsist and live by, is an injurious perversion of that natural right, which the very end and design of society gives them : But then, besides these natural, there are also acquired rights ; and such are those which, either by legal constitution, or by mutual compacts and agreements, we are stored and vested with ; which constitutions and compacts, being absolutely necessary to the upholding and regulating of human societies, it is no less necessary that all those rights which they confer should be inviolably preserved ; and whoever knowingly or wilfully takes away, or detains from another, what he is thus intitled to by law or agreement, is guilty either of a fraud or robbery, either of which is an unjust violation of the rights of human society.

The practice of justice and righteousness, as it is confined to human society, consists therefore in not intrenching either upon the natural or acquired rights of those with whom we have any dealing or intercourse ; in not endeavouring to deprive them either of their lives or livelihoods ; unless by their own actions they forfeit them to us, in imparting our true meaning to them by our words, and neither hiding it under lies and falsehoods, nor disguising it with equivocal reservations, in making
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good to them all our lawful and possible promises, in not falsely aspersing their good names and reputation, nor suffering them to be falsely aspersed, when we are able to vindicate them; in neither using them cruelly in our dealings, so as wilfully to damnify them, nor so hardly as either to take all the advantage to ourselves, or not to allow them such a competent share of it, as is necessary to support and maintain them. In a word, not to defraud or rob them of any thing, which either by constitution of law, or by compact and agreement, they have a right to. This is civil righteousness, and without it it is impossible that any society should be happy: for how can any one be secure in a society where violence and rapine, falsehood and oppression, reign; where causes are decided not by rules of justice, but by dint of power, and the strongest arm is the sole arbitrator of right and wrong; where promises and professions are only traps and snares, and every man lays ambushes in his words, and lurks behind them in reserved meanings, only to wait an opportunity to surprise and ruin every one he converses with? It would doubtless be far more eligible for men to disperse and disband their society, and live apart as vermin do, and subsist by robbing and filching from one another, than to live together (as they must in such a state of injustice) like bundles of briars and thorns, and out of their mutual jealousies and distrusts, be continually tearing and scratching one another.

If we go out of this world with an unrighteous temper, we must expect to be confined in the other to an unrighteous society; and if unrighteousness be such a nuisance to our society in this life, what a plague will it be to it in the life to come? For the most barbarous societies of men in this life have some remains of justice and equity among them; and though the best of them have many corrupt members that are bad in the main, yet whether it be by their natural temper, or their fear of punishment or disgrace, or by their sense of honour or checks of conscience, they are frequently restrained

from many bad things, particularly from dishonesty and injustice, by which means their society is rendered much more tolerable. But in the other life, as they are all perfectly good that are in the society of the good, so they are all wicked that are in the society of the wicked ; and whatever checks there may be in their natures, to any particular acts of wickedness, they are all borne down by their inveterate malice against God, and outrageous despair of ever being reconciled to him. This is all their society with one another; there is not the least intermixture of just and righteous intercourses, but all their conversation is falsehood and treachery, violence and oppression, and whatever else is hurtful and injurious to one another : for the devil, who is the sovereign prince of their society, is described in Scripture to be “ the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning,” and doubtless the miserable vassals of that dark kingdom do all imitate his manners, and tread in his footsteps. That we may not have our portion among them, it is a great part of the business of our holy religion, to train us up for better company, by inuring us to the practice of righteousness and justice : for so it obliges us to “ do unto men whatsoever we would that men should do unto us ;” to be “ harmless as doves, and wise as serpents ; to converse in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity ; to keep up an honest conversation in the world ; not to lie to one another ; not to go beyond or defraud our brother in any manner.” These are obligations laid upon us by the Gospel, that we maintain a strict integrity in all our professions and intercourses with men, and not to allow ourselves in any course of action which the laws of justice and sincerity disapprove ; to measure our words by our meaning, and our meaning, so far as we are able, by the truth and reality of things ; to converse among men with a generous openness and freedom, and with as little reserve and disguise as is possible and prudent, considering what a treacherous and ill-natured world we have to deal with ; to be what we seem, and not to paint
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ill meaning with smiling looks and smooth pretences; to notify our intentions, and unfold our hearts; and so ~~far~~ as innocent prudence will admit, to turn ourselves outwards to all we converse with; to give to every one his due, and not to intrench upon other mens rights, whether it be to their lives or liberties, reputations or estates: In a word, to weigh to our neighbours and ourselves in the same balance, and to do to them whatever we could reasonably wish they should do to us, if we were in their persons and circumstances. By the practice of which excellent rules, our minds will, by degrees, be refined and purified from all disposition to fraud and injustice; and then, when we go from hence into eternity, we shall carry thither with us such a just and righteous frame of mind, such an honest plainness and integrity of temper, as will immediately qualify and dispose us for the society of just men made perfect; who, finding us already united to them in disposition and nature, will joyfully receive us into their blessed communion.

Oh, the blessed state we shall be in, when, being stripped of all partiality and unjust desire, of all insincerity and craftiness of temper, we shall be admitted into a nation of just and righteous people, where every one has his appropriate seat and fulness of glory, and is so perfectly contented with it, that he never covets what another enjoys? Thus every one possesses what is his own, without the least suspicion of being ejected by a subtler, or more powerful neighbour; where being perfectly assured of each other's integrity, they converse together with the greatest openness and freedom, and in all their language, whatever it be, they read their hearts, and convey their intentions to one another; their souls converse face to face, and they freely unbosom themselves to one another, without the least disguise or dissimulation; there is no such thing in all their society as a mystery or secret, they are all friends to one another, and every one has a window in every one's breast.

Oh blessed God! what a most happy conversation must such souls as these enjoy with one another, from whose society all fraud and falshood, violence and oppression are for ever banished! For while they live together as they do, in the continual exercise of perfect righteousness and integrity, they can neither design upon, nor suspect one another, and so consequently must needs converse together with infinite security and freedom; and being all of them thus inviolably safe in each other's sincerity and justice, every one enjoys his proper rank and degree of glory, without fear or disturbance, and freely communicates his wise and excellent thoughts to every one, without any strangeness and reserve. Thus all heaven over, there is a most perfect freedom of conversation among those righteous people that inhabit it, and every one is every one's neighbour, and every one's neighbour is as himself: for in all their communications and intercourse they mutually exchange persons with one another; and there is no one that does that to another, which he would not gladly have done to himself in the same condition and circumstances; none of them all can possibly be aggrieved, because they are every one dealt by, just as they would be, most fairly, most righteously, and faithfully: And hence there can be no grudgings among them, as whisperings, backbitings, or spiteful misrepresentations; because every one likes what every one does, and so they are perfectly satisfied with one another. And thus we see, that in the exercise of perfect righteousness and integrity, all the society of heaven is rendered perfectly happy.

As we are rational creatures, related to one another, we are obliged to behave ourselves peaceably in our respective states and relations: for society being nothing but an united multitude, it is indispensably necessary, for the preservation of its union, that every individual member of it should peaceably comport himself towards every one in that degree and order in which he is placed; because, as the health of natural bodies depends upon the

the harmony and agreement of their parts, so does the prosperity of societies on political ones; for it is peace and mutual accord, which is the soul that animates and unites society, and keeps the parts of it from dispersing and flying abroad into atoms, which nothing but force and violence can hinder them from, when once they are broken into discords and dissensions; so true is that of our Saviour, "A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand;" for besides that division impairs the strength of a society, which like an impetuous stream, being parted into several currents, runs with far less force, and is much more easily fordable; besides this, I say, faction and discord naturally disunite and separate society, as they dissolve the bonds of peace which hold it together; for a society, without peace, is but an aggregated body, whose parts lie together in a confused heap, but have no joints or sinews to fasten them to one another; for want of which, instead of mutually assisting, they do but mutually load and oppress each other, which must necessarily divide their wills and their interests; and when that is done, it is only external force that hinders them from dividing and separating their persons. Upon this account therefore, every man is obliged, as he is a member of human society, to comport himself peaceably with all men; because otherwise he will necessarily render himself a public pest and nuisance. For so long as he is of an unquiet and turbulent spirit, instead of being an help, he must necessarily be a disease to every community of which he is a member; and if those with whom he is joined were all of his humour and spirit, it would be much better for them all to live asunder in the most solitary condition, than continue in society together; because, instead of helping and assisting, they would be sure to be continually vexing and plaguing one another.

How many sad instances have we in these distracted times, of the mischiefs done by children of faction and discord? What havock have they made with the re-

putation of the most worthy? How have they set neighbour against neighbour, friend against friend, and ruined all that strength which depended on the united hearts of good Protestants and good Englishmen?

If any of us should go into the other world with an unquiet and quarrelsome temper, we shall be thereby inclined to, and prepared for, the most wretched and miserable society, even the society of those factious fiends, that could not be quiet in heaven itself, but raised a mutiny before the throne of God, and for so doing were driven thence, and damned to keep one another company in endless misery and despair. The souls of men therefore, being by the laws of the invisible state always assigned to that society of spirits to which they are most connaturalized in their temper, we must expect, if we go into eternity with turbulent and contentious minds, to be thrust into the society of devils and damned ghosts, with whom we are already joined in a strict communion of natures. The most horrid and frightful idea I can form in my mind of such wretched company is, that of an infinite multitude of snarling and quarrelsome spirits, crowded like so many scorpions and adders in a den together, and there forced, by the venom of their temper, to live in continual mutiny, and be perpetually hissing and spitting poison at one another.

Wherefore, since to be united by indissoluble ligaments to such miserable company will be the certain fate of all factious and contentious souls, enemies of true peace, union, and concord, our blessed religion, whose great design is to advance our happiness, has taken abundant care to educate our minds in quietness and peace. For hither tend all those precepts of it, which require us to
 "follow peace with all men, to be at peace among
 "ourselves, to follow after the things that make for
 "peace, to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of
 "peace; to be of one mind, and to live in peace;
 "and, if it be possible, to live peaceably with all men."

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These are the lessons taught us in the holy scriptures. How they are practised by those that foment our divisions, fill the world with scandal and calumny, and at the expence of truth and charity, nay even of common sense and common honesty, inflame the minds of Christians and Protestants, with unnatural heats and fatal animosities; let every Christian reader judge. We are restrained by the strictest obligations in holy writ, from all factious and turbulent behaviour, from a spirit of discord and persecution; and to demean ourselves in those sacred or civil societies, of which we are members, with all gentleness and moderation. And unless we do sincerely endeavour to fulfil these obligations, however we may monopolize godliness to our own party, and claw and canonize one another, we are saints of a quite different strain from those blessed ones above, and are acted by the factious spirit of the devil, whose business it is to kindle disturbances and commotions wherever he comes. This therefore must be our great care, if we design for heaven, to root out of our tempers all inclination to contention and discord, and to compose ourselves into a sedate and peaceable, calm and gentle frame of spirit; and not only to avoid all unnecessary quarrels and contentions ourselves, but, so far as in us lies, to be peacemakers between others, and to preserve a friendly union with, and among our fellow-members. And if through human frailty and infirmity, through our own ignorance of the plausible pretences of seducers, through the too great prevalence of our worldly interest, or the principles of a bad education, it should be our misfortune to be insensibly misled into unwarrantable dissents and divisions, yet still to keep our minds in a teachable temper, and our ears open to truth and conviction, to be desirous of accommodation, to be willing to hear the reasons on both sides; and as soon as we are convinced of our error, to repent of our division, and immediately to return to unity and peace.

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Which if it be our constant practice and endeavour, we shall by degrees form our minds into such a peaceable and amicable temper, that when we go into the other world, where we shall be perfectly disengaged from all temporal interests, and thoroughly convinced of all our erroneous prejudices, our souls will be effectually contempered with the quiet and peaceable society of the blessed, who having no private interests to pursue, no particular affections to gratify, no ends or aims but what are common to them all, which is to adore, and imitate, and love, that never-failing spring whence all their felicity flows; it is impossible there should be any occasion administered by any of them, of any rupture of communion. If we would live for ever with these blessed spirits, we must now endeavour to calm and compose ourselves with their temper, to discharge our minds, as much as we are able, of every froward and contentious humour, and reduce our wills to a perfect loathing of them; and so being qualified for their society, we may be admitted to it when we go away from this wrangling world. All their communion is a perfect concord of souls, wherein there is no such thing as division, passing cruel censures, affixing hard names, or bandying anathemas at one another; but in mind and heart they are all as perfectly one, as if they were all animated by one and the same soul. And thus they live unspeakably happy, in the mutual exercise of an everlasting peace, and all their conversation with one another, is perfect harmony without discord.

As we are rational creatures related to one another, we are obliged modestly to submit to our superiors, and cheerfully to condescend to our inferiors, in those respective societies of which we are members. It being necessary to the order and end of all societies, that their members should be distinguished into superior and inferior ranks and stations; that some should be trusted with the power of commanding, and others reduced to the condition

tion of obedience ; that so in this regular subordination, they may every one in their several stations be obliged to, and assist each other, and according to their several capacities to contribute to the good of the whole, which in a state of equality, wherein every man would be absolute lord of himself, cannot be expected, considering the differing humours and interests by which men are acted. This, I say, being upon this account necessary, it is upon the same account equally necessary, that they should mutually perform those offices to one another, which are proper to their respective ranks and stations, and are indeed the foundations and conditions of their inequality. Superiors should look upon themselves as trustees for the publick good, whom God has invested with authority over others, not to domineer and gratify their own imperious wills, but to provide for, and secure the commonwealth, and consequently to take care that they do not prostitute their power to their own private avarice and ambition, but that they employ it for the common good and benefit of their subjects and inferiors; that they be ready to do them all good offices, to compassionate their infirmities, consult their conveniencies, and comply with all their reasonable supplications; considering that for this end they derived their authority from God, who is the fountain of authority, and will strictly call them to account for their good and bad administration. And so for the inferiors, it is no less necessary for the common good, that they perform their parts towards those that are above them; that they behave themselves towards them with all that loyalty and modesty, respect, and submission, which their place and authority call for; that they reverence them in the legal exercise of their offices, as the vicegerents of God, and address to them as to sacred persons, rendering a chearfull obedience to that divine authority which is stamped upon all their just laws and commands; considering, that in their several degrees they represent the person of the great sovereign of the world, to whom we owe an entire

tire subjection, and consequently are to be obeyed and submitted to, in every thing that he hath not expressly countermanded. And that subjects and superiors should thus behave themselves towards one another, is indispensably necessary to the welfare of all societies; for while the inferiors of any society do obstinately refuse to submit to the just commands of their superiors, and the superiors to condescend to the common good of their inferiors, they are contending together, either for a confusion or a tyranny. If the superiors prevail, tyranny follows; if the inferiors, confusion; either of which is extremely mischievous, not only to the society in general, but to each of the contending parties: For if confusion follows, it is not only the superior party suffers, by being deposed from his authority, which is always to be considered as given him for the common good, but the inferior too, by being deprived of protection, and exposed to one another's rapine and violence. If tyranny follows, it is not only the inferior party suffers, by being forced to a rigorous and uneasy obedience, but the superior too, by being continually perplexed how to force and extort that obedience. Thus both parties suffer under the bad effects of each others misdemeanor. To make our society happy, it is necessary, that whether we be superiors or inferiors, we should be of a gentle, easy, and tractable spirit; that so which rank soever we are placed in, we may be pliable either way to a fair condescension, or a just submission. For while we are of obstinate, perverse, untractable tempers, we are neither fit to be superiors nor inferiors, but must necessarily be plagues and grievances to our society, which rank or order soever we are placed in. And tho' in this life we have not always such a sensible experience of the evil and mischief of this malignant temper, because now it is counter-influenced by those more meek and auspicious ones, that are in conjunction with it: Yet when we go into eternity, we shall be confined to such a society of spirits, as are all throughout of our own genius and temper.

temper. For as in the society of the blessed, there is a conjunction of every virtue in every member, so there is of every vice in the society of the wicked; who do not only retain those vices in their natures which they were ~~inclined~~ ^{have} inclined and addicted to, but are also continually excited to all other vices they are capable of, by their inveterate enmity against God; which in that miserable estate is perpetually enraged, by their despair of being ever reconciled to him. Thus whatever wicked temper we carry with us into eternity, we shall be sure to meet with it in every individual member of the society of the wicked; and consequently if we carry thither with us a perverse and untractable temper, that will not endure either to submit or condescend, we shall be sure to find the same humour reigning throughout all the society of the wicked; and then being eternally united to it, as we must expect to be, if we are called to it by nature; in what a wretched state shall we be, when every member of our society shall be of the same unconvertible temper with ourselves, and we shall find none that will comply with, or endeavour to sooth and mollify our obstinacy? When all our whole society shall consist of a company of stiff and stubborn spirits, that will neither submit to, nor bear with one another, but every one will have his will upon every one, so far as he is able to force and extort it? when those that are superior in might and power, do all rule with a fierce and tyrannical will, and will condescend to nothing that is beneficial for their subjects; and those that are inferior, do obey with a perverse and stubborn heart, and will submit to nothing but what they are forced and compelled to? In a word, when they all mutually hate and abominate each other, and those that command are a company of cruel and imperious devils, that impose nothing but grievances and plagues; and those that obey are a company of surly untractable slaves, that submit to nothing but what they are driven to by plagues; and thus plagues and grievances are both the
matter

matter and the motion of all their obedience and subjection. Those that compel are like so many savage tyrants, continually vexed and enraged with stubborn oppositions and resistances; and those that are compelled, like so many obstinate gally-slaves, are continually lashed into an insufferable obedience, and forced by one torment to submit to another.

This being therefore the miserable state and issue of a perverse, stubborn, and untractable temper, the gospel, whose great design it is to direct us to our happiness, does industriously endeavour to root it out of our minds, and to plant in its room a gentle, obsequious, and condescending disposition. For thither tend all those evangelical precepts, which require us "to become weak to the weak, that we may gain them, to bear with their infirmities, to support them and be patient towards them, to submit ourselves to our elders, and to those that have rule over us; to obey our magistrates, our parents and our masters; to be subject to principalities, not to speak evil of dignities; to honour all men as they deserve, to hold good men in reputation, and in honour to prefer one another;" The sense of all which is, to oblige us to treat all men as becomes us, in the rank and station we are placed in; to honour those that are superiors, whether in place or virtue; to give that modest deference to their judgments, that reverence to their persons, that respect to their virtues, and homage to their desires or commands, which the degree or kind of their superiority requires; to condescend to those that are inferior, and treat them with all that candor and ingenuity, sweetness and affability, that the respective distances of our state will allow; to consult their conveniences, to do them all good offices, and bear with their infirmities, so far as is safely and wisely tolerable. By the constant practice of which our minds will be gradually cured of all that perverseness and surliness of temper, which indispose us to the respective duties of our relations; of all that contempt and selfishness, which renders us averse to the proper duties of superiors; and of all that

that self-conceit and impatience of command, which indispose us to the duty of inferiors. And our wills being once wrought into an easy pliability, either to submission or condescension, we are in a forward preparation of mind to live under the government of heaven; where doubtless, under God, the supreme lord and sovereign, there are numberless degrees of superiority and inferiority. Some are said to reap sparingly, some abundantly; some to be rulers of five cities, some of ten; some to be the least, and some to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven: All which implies, that in that blessed state, there is a great variety of degrees of glory and advancement: And indeed it cannot be otherwise in the nature of the thing; for our happiness consisting in the perfection of our natures, the more or less perfect we are, the more or less happy we must necessarily be; for every farther degree of goodness we attain to, is a widening and enlargement of our souls for farther degrees of glory and beatitude: And accordingly, when we arrive at heaven, which is the element of beatitude, we shall all be filled according to the content and measure of our capacities; and drink in more or less of its rivers of pleasure, as we are more or less enlarged to contain them. But though in the kingdom of heaven, as well as in the kingdoms of the earth, there are numberless degrees of advancement and dignity; and one star there, as well as here, differs from another star in glory; yet so freely and cheerfully do all they condescend and submit to one another, in these their respective differences of rank and station, that in the widest distances of their state and degrees of glory, they all maintain the dearest intimacies and familiarities with each other; and neither those that are superior, are either envied for their height, or contemned for their familiarity; nor those that are inferior, despised for their meanness, or oppressed for their meekness.

For in that blessed state, every one being best pleased with what best becomes him, it is every one's joy to be-
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best in the whole kind of rational beings, is the supreme rule and measure of them all. In imitating the blessed people above, we do what God himself would do, were he in our place; and what the son of God himself did, when he was in our nature; and there is no other difference in his life and ours, but what necessarily arises out of different states and relations. And what more glorious thing can we do, than to live by the pattern of their lives, who live so exactly by the pattern of God's? Their example is an imitation in kind of all those particular excellencies in him, which they may and ought to imitate; and is an imitation in general, of that eternal decorum, with respect to conditions and states, which he constantly observes in all his transactions with his creatures. And as their example is a perfect copy of God's, so it is a copy, fitted in all particulars, for our use and imitation: For it does not only describe to us all those particular excellencies in him, which are to be imitated by us, but all those particular duties, which that eternal law of equity and goodness, by which he governs himself in his state, requires of us in ours; and shews not only wherein we are to imitate him in kind, but also wherein we are to follow him in general, in doing what is most fit for us in the state and relation of creatures, even as he does what is most fit for him, in the state and relation of a God and creator. The example of those heavenly inhabitants is the example of God himself, exactly fitted and attuned to the state and condition of creatures. For just as they live, the all-wise, and all-good God himself would live, if he were in their state and relation. Wherefore by imitating their heavenly lives and manners, we do ourselves the greatest right, and do most effectually consult the glory and honour of our own natures. For while we tread in theirs, we tread in the footsteps of God, and have his glorious example to warrant and justify our actions, we behave ourselves as it becomes the children of the king of heaven, and so far as it
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confists with the condition of creatures, we live like so many gods in the world, which is doubtless the utmost height of honour and glory, that any rational ambition can aspire to.

In the next place, let us consider the great freedom and liberty of a religious life. So long as we live earthly and sensual lives, our free-born souls are imprisoned in sense, and all their motions are circumscribed and bounded in this the narrow sphere of sensitive goods and enjoyments. When we would follow our reason, and do as that prescribes and dictates, we find ourselves miserably hampered and entangled. The lusts of our flesh do hang, like givies, so heavily upon us, that whenever our reason and conscience call, we cannot move with any freedom; but are fain to labour at every step, and after a few faint essays, are utterly tired under the weight of our reluctant inclinations. The good which many times we would do, we do not; the law in our minds being countervoted by the law in our members: Our reason and conscience tell us, that we ought to love God above all, to adore and worship him, and surrender up ourselves to his command and disposal, and we are many times strangely inclined to follow their dictates and directions: But alas! when we come to put them in execution, we find so many pull-backs within us, so many strong and stubborn aversions to our good inclinations, that we have not the power to do as we would, or to dispose of ourselves according to our own most reasonable desires; but like miserable slaves that are chained to the oar, we are fain to row on wherever our superior lusts do command us, tho' we plainly see we are running on a rock, and invading our own destruction. And as we are not free in this ill state of life to follow our reason, so neither are we free to follow our lusts. For as when we would follow our reason, our lusts cling about and entangle us, so when we would follow our lusts, our reason clogs and restrains us; and by objecting to us the indecency and

and danger, the infinite turpitude and hazard of our sinful courses, lays so many rubs in our way, that we cannot sin with any freedom, but wherever we go we walk like prisoners, with the shackles of shame and fear at our heels. In this extremity therefore, what is to be done that we may be free? The case is plain, we must resolve to conquer either our reason or our lusts; if we conquer our reason, which we shall find by far the harder task of the two, we shall acquire the freedom of devils and brutes; the freedom to do mischief, and to wallow in the mire without shame and remorse; but if we conquer our lusts we acquire the freedom of men, nay of saints and angels; the freedom to act reasonably without reluctance or aversion; and this being much more easily to be acquired than the former, I dare appeal to any man's reason, which of the two is in itself more eligible; tho' at first we must expect to find ourselves confined and straitened by our vicious aversions, we shall be immediately released from all that shame and fear, which did so continually curb us in the career of our wickedness; and even our vicious aversion. If we courageously persist in our good resolution, will grow weaker and weaker, and be every day less and less cumbersome, 'till it is totally extinguished; and then we shall feel ourselves entirely restored into our own power, and be able, without check or controul, to dispose of ourselves and all our motions, according as shall seem to us most fit and reasonable. By engaging ourselves in the heavenly life, we enter into a state of glorious liberty; and if we constantly persist in it, and do still prevalently list to live as becomes us, we shall be more and more free to live as we list, 'till at last we are arrived into a perfect liberty, in which we shall live without restraint or controul, without check of conscience, or reluctance of inclination; which are the two main bars that confine and strengthen men in their operations. If therefore we would ever be free, let us immediately come off from our vicious courses to the practice of this divine

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And heavenly life; wherein by degrees, if we courageously hold on, we shall wear off those shackles that do so miserably hamper and entangle us, and then we shall be entirely free to do whatever our reason dictates to us; then we shall "run the ways of God's commandments," and, like our blessed brethren above, be all life, spirit, and wing, in the discharge of our duty to him. *

Farther, let us consider the pleasure of this heavenly life. It is true, there is a sort of pleasure that results from all the acts of a sensual and earthly conversation; but we find, by experience, that though in the pursuit it strongly allures and enchants us, yet in the fruition it always disappoints our expectation, and scarce performs in the enjoyment one half of what is promised to our hopes. At the best, it is but a present and transient satisfaction of our brutish sense, a satisfaction that dims the sight, sullies the beauty, impairs the vigour, and retards the activity of the mind, diverting it from better operations, and indisposing it to the fruition of purer delights, leaving no comfortable relish or gladsome memory behind it, but often going out in a sink, and terminating in bitterness, regret, and disgrace. But in each act of this divine and celestial light there is a sampling of the pleasure of heaven, something of those divine refreshments and consolations upon which the good spirits of heaven do live. For the greatest part of their heaven springs from within their own bosoms, even from the conformity of their souls to the heavenly state, and the sprightly outgoings of their words and actions to the heavenly objects, from their contemplating and loving, their praying and adoring the most high God; from their imitation of his perfections, their subjection to his will, and dependence on his veracity. All which acts have the most ravishing pleasures appendent to them, and are so necessary to the felicity of rational creatures, that the wit of man cannot fancy a rational heaven without them. For the heaven of a rational creature consisting in the most

intense and vigorous exercise of its rational faculties about the most suitable and convenient objects, what object can be more conversant to such faculties than that Almighty Sovereign of beings, whose power is the spring of all truth, and whose nature is the pattern of all goodness? Thus, without a perfect union of our minds, and wills, and affections with God, there can be no possible idea of a perfect heaven of rational pleasures, but in this blessed union lies the very soul and quintessence of heaven. Since therefore in every act of every virtue of the divine life there is at least an imperfect union of the soul with God, it necessarily follows that there must be some degree of the pleasure of heaven in every one. And if we do not experience much greater joy and delight in the acts of this divine love, than ever we did in the highest epicurisms and sensualities, it is not because there are not much greater in them, but because we never exerted them with that sprightliness and vigour that we do our sensual appetites and perceptions; because we are clogged in the exercise of them, either by false principles, or bodily indispositions, or sinful averersions. But if we would take the pains to *inure* and *accustom* ourselves to these heavenly acts, we should find by degrees they would grow natural and easy to us, and our souls would be so habituated, contempered, and disposed to them, that we should upon all occasions exert them with great freedom and enlargement. And then we should begin to feel and relish the pleasure of them, then we should feel a heavenly delight springing up from within us, and unfolding itself in each beatifical act of our heavenly conversation: we should find ourselves under the central force of heaven, most sweetly drawn along and attracted thither by the powerful magnetism of its joys and pleasures; and in every act of our celestial behaviour we should have some foretaste of the celestial happiness: we should no longer need external arguments to convince us of the truth and reality of that blessed state; for we should feel it within ourselves, and be able to penetrate

penetrate into its blessed mysteries, by the light of an infallible experience. We should have no occasion to search the records of heaven, to assure ourselves of our interest in it; for by a most sensible earnest of heaven within us, we should be as fully satisfied of our title to it, as if one of its winged messengers should come down from thence, and tell us he saw our names enrolled in the book of life. And with this sweet experience of heaven we should go on to the perfection of happiness, with unspeakable joy and triumph. In every vigorous exercise of every virtue of the heavenly life, we should have such lively tastes and sensations of heaven as would continually excite us to exert them more vigorously; and still the more vigorously we exerted them, the more of heaven we should taste in them. Wherefore as we love pleasure, which is the great invitation to action, let us be persuaded once for all to make a thorough experiment of the heavenly life; and if upon a sufficient trial you do not find it the most pleasant kind of life that ever you led, if you do not experience a far more noble sensation in it than ever you did in all your studied and artificial luxuries, we may very well treat all the writers upon divinity as impostors.

Another consideration, which should weigh with us, is the great ease and repose of a heavenly life and conversation. In every sensual and devilish course of life we find, by experience, there is a great deal of uneasiness and disquiet. For the mind is disturbed, the conscience galled, the affections divided into opposite factions, and the whole soul in a most diseased and restless posture. Indeed it is no wonder it should be so, since it is an unnatural state and condition: For while it is in any unreasonable state of action, the very frame and constitution of it, as it is a rational being, suffers an unnatural violence, and is all unjointed and disordered. And therefore as a body, when its bones are out, is never at rest till they are set again; so a rational soul, when its faculties and powers are dislocated, and put out

of their natural, that is, their rational course of action is continually restless and disturbed, always tossing to and fro, shifting from one posture to another, turning itself from this to the other object and enjoyment; but finding no ease or satisfaction in any, till it is restored again to its own rational course of motion, which is to act and move towards God, for whom it was made, and in whom alone it can be happy. And if its reason were not strangely dosed and stupified with sense and sensitive pleasures, it would doubtless be a thousand times more restless and dissatisfied in this its preternatural state than it is. It would feel much more distraction of mind, anguish of conscience, and tumults of affections, than it is now capable of, amidst the numerous enjoyments and diversions of this world. For as a musical instrument, were it a living thing, would doubtless be sensible of harmony as its proper state, and abhor discord and dissonancy as a thing preternatural to it: So were our reason but alive and awake in us, our souls, which according to our natural frame, were made uniform with God, would be exquisitely sensible of these divine virtues, in which its consonancy consists, as of that which is its proper state and native complexion; and complain as sadly of the vicious distempers of its faculties, as the body does of wounds and diseases. Now by relying on God, we shall totally quit and discharge ourselves of all those restless cares and anxieties, which circle and prick us like a crown of thorns; by our hearty submission to his heavenly will, we shall ease our consciences of all that horror, rage, and anguish, which proceed from the envenomed stings of our guilt; by loving, admiring, and adoring him, our affections will be cured of that inconsistency and inordinacy, which render them so tumultuous and disquieting. These things being once accomplished, the sick and restless soul will presently find itself in perfect health and ease; she will be no more tossed and agitated in a stormy sea of troubled thoughts and guilty reflexions, no more scorched with
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impatience, or drowned with grief, or shaken with fear, or bloated with pride or ambition, but all her affections will be resigned to the blessed empire of a spiritual mind, and clothed in the livery of her reason. All the war and contest between the law in her members, and the law in her mind, is ended in a glorious victory and happy peace; and those divided streams, her will and conscience, her passions and her reason, are united in one channel, and flow towards one and the same ocean. Being thus joined and knit together, by the ties and ligaments of virtue, the soul is perfectly well and easy, and enjoys a most sweet repose within itself. Wherefore if we value our own ease and rest, and would not be endlessly tormented and disquieted, we should heartily engage ourselves in a course of heavenly conversation; and then, though at first we must expect to find some difficulty in it, by reason of its contrariety to our corrupt natures, yet if we vigorously persist in it, we shall find the difficulty will soon wear off, and then it will be all ease and pleasure. For when our nature is depraved, either by sensuality or devilishness, it is like a bone out of joint, full of pain while it is out, and much more painful while it is setting; but as soon as that is done, it is immediately well and easy.

We must consider, in the last place, the absolute necessity of this heavenly life and conversation; for besides that God exacts it of us, as an indispensable condition of our happiness, an heavenly conversation is, in the nature of the thing, necessary to qualify us for heaven: For happiness being a relative thing, implies in the very nature of it a mutual correspondence between the objects, which present us with happiness, and the faculties which taste and enjoy them; and be the objects never so good in themselves, never so pregnant with pleasure and bliss, yet if they do not agree with the faculties to which they are objected, instead of blessing, they will but afflict and torment them: And if a man were placed in the midst of heaven, among all the

ravishing fruitions with which that blessed place abounds, yet unless his mind and temper did suit and agree with them, they would be so many miseries and vexations to him, and he would be afflicted even in Abraham's bosom, and grope for heaven in the midst of paradise. Wherefore supposing God was so unreasonably fond of the happiness of wicked souls, as to prefer it before the honour of his government, the purity of his nature, and the sanction of his laws, yet still there is an unmoveable obstacle behind, which must render their future felicity impossible; and that is, that it cannot be without a plain contradiction to the nature of things; the temper of wicked souls being so wholly repugnant to all the felicities of the other world, that if they were all set before them, they would not be able to enjoy them, but must be forced to pine and famish amidst all that plenty of delights, there being no viand in all that heavenly entertainment which they would relish with any sweetness. If God therefore should so far pardon them, as not to punish them himself by an immediate stroke of vengeance, it would be the utmost favour his omnipotent goodness could do for them, while any continued in their sins, which, notwithstanding such a pardon, would for ever continue them extremely miserable. It is not so much the place as the state which makes either heaven or hell: The state of heaven and hell consists in perfect holiness and wickedness; and proportionably as we improve in either of these, so we approach towards the one state or the other. For as heaven is the center of all that is virtuous, pure, and holy, and all that is good tends thither by a natural sympathy; so hell is the center of all impiety and wickedness, and all that is bad naturally presses and sinks down thither, as towards its proper place and element. And should not the divine vengeance concern itself to exclude all wicked souls out of heaven, yet their own wickedness would do it: for that is a place of such inaccessible light and purity, that no impurity or wickedness can approach it,

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part of necessity be beaten off with the dreadful lightnings of its glory, and tumbled headlong down as often as it tries to climb up thither. As, on the other hand, should not God by an immediate vengeance precipitate wicked souls into hell, yet their own wickedness, by the mighty weight of its own nature, would inevitably press and sink them down into that miserable condition. If therefore we mean to go to heaven, and to be happy there, we must now endeavour to dispose our minds to it; which is no other way to be done, but by leading a heavenly life and conversation, which by degrees will habituate and naturalize our souls to the heavenly virtues, and so work and inlay them into the frame and temper of our minds, that it will be our greatest pleasure to be exerting and exercising them. They will then be dressed and made ready for heaven; and when we go hence to take possession of its joys, they will be all so agreeable to our prepared appetites, that we shall presently fall to, and feed upon them with infinite gust and relish. But till by living a heavenly life we have disposed ourselves for heaven, we are utterly incapable of enjoying it. Wherefore things are now reduced to this issue, that our sins or our souls must die, and we must necessarily shake hands either with heaven or our lusts. Unless then we value eternal happiness so little, as to exchange it for the sordid and trifling pleasures of sin, and unless we love our sins so well as to ransom them with the blood of our immortal souls, it concerns us speedily to engage ourselves in this heavenly life and conversation. For this is an eternal immutable law, that if we will be wicked, we must be miserable.

One would think that such considerations as these should of themselves be sufficient to set people in the right way which leads to heaven, to make them in love with holiness for the pleasantness of its paths, as well as for the glory to which they tend; but there are certain minds so clogged with earth, that they can relish nothing which has not a little mixture of earthliness. The

road to heaven must be more accommodated to their usual walk, or they will not be kept in it; they will return as soon as they have entered it, and be frightened at so strict and difficult a passage: To engage these, there are other reflexions to be offered on this subject, and those that arise not so much from the notion of religion, as the true idea of things.

It would be an endless labour, to declare what God and his saints judge of all the things we see in this world; it would alone comprehend whatever can be said with truth: however, it will be worth our pains to make an essay as to some of the principal objects of man's desires, that it may serve for a model how to judge of all others.

One of the greatest miseries is, to set too high an esteem on temporal things; and the reason we do so is, because we seldom consider ourselves but in that small part of our duration which makes up our life here, and becomes part of that vortex which hurries it away without looking any farther: Hence does that false grandeur we allow to things of this world take its rise; and the only means to undeceive ourselves is, to take another prospect, and to look on ourselves such as we are in truth, and in the sight of Almighty God: We then immediately find that we have an immortal being, whose duration extends to an eternity that follows, and that we are ordained to be eternally happy or miserable.

Man compared to God Almighty, is not only nothing, but even all men together to him appear even as a drop of water to the whole ocean; all the greatness and advantages of the world compared to the least of men, are also to be looked on as nothing, since they fill up but an indivisible part of his duration: Therefore taking him whole and entire, they can neither give a greater value to him, nor make him more happy. Eternity admits of no measure or comparison; if so, what is a kingdom enjoyed during the space of seventy years, and that even of the whole

whole universe? what is some small principality in this kingdom? what shall we say of the several degrees and states under those of princes? To what a surprising littleness does this prospect reduce them to? and yet man takes from hence the occasion and rise of his vanity.

It is strange to imagine what difficulty men have to persuade themselves of the nothingness of this world, since every thing they see minds them of it: What else is the history of men and nations, but a continual lesson that men and things are nothing? for by describing to us what they were, they at the same time let us see they are no more: They tell us, that all that greatness, all that pomp, which from time to time was the wonder of men, that all these princes, all these conquerors, with all their magnificence and great designs, are, in respect to us, shrunk into nothing; that they were certain vapours which are dispersed, certain phantasms which are vanished.

What can we descry in this world, but proofs of this sad truth? Do not we see every hour those disappear, who have shone with the greatest splendour, who have made the greatest noise, during this life, while there remains nothing of them, but a slight and fading memory? Do not we see that all things are continually swallowed up in the abyss of time past? that even our life slips out of our hands? that what of it is spent, appears no more to our sight, and that time has hurried away all our miseries, all our pleasures, all the troubles and cares we have, or feel, without leaving behind any other remembrances of them, than such as dreams do; and it is for this reason the wise man bids us look on temporal things, as on the fond imaginations which trouble our sleep.

What is most dreadful in this is, that, on one side, we will not conceive the nothingness of the world; and, on the other, we apprehend it but too much: Whatever is past and gone, we look on as nothing; all those that are dead, are nothing with us; we take those whole actions

are recorded in story, for people who have been, but are no more, nor do we reflect that they yet live more than ever, because their souls are infinitely more active, and that this life produced only weak and languishing actions, is rather to be esteemed a state of death than life, in respect of the other. It is hence that we nourish in us an esteem for the grandeur of this world, because we take them to be as durable and as lasting as ourselves, nor do we dream that we shall subsist after they shall perish; and that those who were once masters of them, though they do not cease to be, shall yet be deprived to all eternity of those things which were the objects of their pride.

What shall we say of human glory, which makes so deep an impression on our minds? What has it of solid and real in the sight of Almighty God? It subsists only in the knowledge we have of the good opinion others have of us: And these, for the most part, are such as know us little, love us not much, and whose judgments, even in our opinions, are neither solid, nor greatly to be valued. In all other things we often slight and condemn their sentiments. Besides, this good opinion others have of us is perfectly useless; it adds nothing either to soul or body, nor does it lessen the least of our miseries; it only contributes to deceive and cheat us, while by them we are inclined to judge of ourselves, not by the rule of truth, but by that of other mens opinions, which having busied our heads during life, when death comes, they disappear on a sudden; for then we have no sense or sentiment for such trifles; and this is that smoke, that vapour, which thus fills and puffs us up.

What a difference then is there between this human glory and that which the saints shall enjoy to all eternity? A glory as substantial and valuable as that of man is vain and contemptible, because it has qualities quite opposite: The beatitude of the elect shall be accompanied with that endearing spirit of society and union before spoken of; they shall know one another perfectly; they shall

shall jointly give glory to God for the favour he has done each one in particular; the good deeds of each saint shall then be known to all the rest, and for ever shall they be occasions of joy, praise, and thanksgiving, to every blessed member of those regions of bliss; they will cast all their crowns at the feet of the Lamb, not their own only, but those of all the rest; because they will not only glorify God in themselves, but shall glorify him in all his saints.

Oh the truly solid glory of the elect of God! A glory that consists not in a fleeting splendour, but remains for ever! a glory not confined and built on the knowledge of some few envious and ignorant people, but which shall have as many witnesses as there are citizens in the celestial Jerusalem! a glory that consists not in the useless and rash approbation of those who know us not, who know not themselves, but in the joy of an innumerable number of holy spirits, who by the light of truth shall see the bottom of our hearts.

The wicked little enjoy their glory during life, and it quite vanishes at the hour of their death: if for any time it continues in the memory of man, it is not for them, they have no share in it; and when all is done, it shall be entirely destroyed at the day of judgment: For the punishment of the wicked shall be attended with a spirit of division among themselves, as has been already explained: The intenseness of their torments will so entirely employ them about themselves, that they shall leave no room for the remembrance of that esteem others had for them when alive; which is a mortifying consideration for the men of the world, who are taken up with nothing more than what they call Quality, and that which gives some the denomination of Persons of quality, to distinguish them from such as are not so: they extend this distinction so far, that a man is thought to differ less from a beast, than a man of quality from one of mean birth. This quality stifles almost all others, even the most spiritual and divine; we do not only

raise it above the mind, but even above virtue and the quality of being a Christian: And if it happen we do not make this difference in positive words, at least we do in our judgment; for who are they that sincerely value the condition of a poor and meanly born Christian, above that of a debauched man of quality? Who is he that can see the profound abjection of this great one, and high elevation of that poor Christian: It is plain therefore, that the idea we have of condition and quality, deceives us, and that it is worth our while to examine what there is of real and substantial in this common object of man's vanity, to the end we may disabuse ourselves. Something has been said on this subject, in treating of others, but the vanity of birth is so apt to swell the mind, and elate even the temper of a Christian, that one cannot do better than look a little into this boasted superiority.

To be a person of quality and birth,* according to the world, is to be sprung from parents who hold a considerable rank in it; but this birth of itself gives no advantage of either mind or body; it takes away no defect, and persons of quality have faults as great as others: There is therefore no solid reason which makes persons of quality more to be esteemed than others; nevertheless, because there ought to be a decorum among men, it is with reason, that in some places custom carries it, that persons thus born shall enjoy the precedence of others, and be preferred before them.

If we stopped here, there would be nothing unjust in the idea we have of what is called quality; but we proceed farther: Of this arbitrary order established by men upon no grounds, taken from the persons themselves, we create another which is natural and indispensable, and we accustom ourselves to look on it as something fastened to the very being of those to whom we give this precedence.

We do not content ourselves with giving them that exterior and interior respect which is due to them (for
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In this there would be nothing but what is rational and warrantable) but we add to this what is not due to them, a respect which springs from our own errors and corruptions; we frame to ourselves large and corrupt ideas of this state, we look on it as the very height of all happiness; we desire it ourselves, we envy it in those that have it; and if we prefer them before others, it is only out of an ardent passion we have for the goods and honours they enjoy. Thus there is no kind of people great ones ought to fear more than those that admire them most; because they will be always ready, if they could, to rob them of their greatness: In the mean time, that such admirers are very numerous, and we consider not that disposition which they conceal, but only that esteem they make shew of; they are not the least contributors to this imaginary felicity of the great, because in them they find those sentiments and that disposition, the prospect of which is ~~that~~, which flatters most the vanity of ambitious souls.

All these judgments are false; for it is no happiness to receive from others these marks of esteem, and it is a plain piece of injustice to take delight in being the object of that admiration, which springs only from the corruption of men. However persons of quality, knowing the sentiments and ideas, which the generality have of their condition, frame thence the conceit they have of it; they look on it as incorporated in their being; they fancy themselves raised infinitely above the heads of others; and it is almost impossible for them to consider themselves as levelled with those who are below them in the order of the world. These are those false ideas we ought to correct, by considering the judgment God passes in this estate, even that these marks of honour, these differences established by men, contain nothing of true and solid, because they are "only ceremonies and shews, void of reality," as St. Chrysostom terms them. The same must be said of those judgments, because
they

they are false, and are useless to such as take pleasure in them, rendering those who delight in them miserable. The riches and delights of the great, lie under the same censure, giving both alike the same occasion of temptation, and proving great obstacles in their way to heaven. This is the judgment God passes on what we call greatness and quality; and hence it follows, that whoever judges otherwise, judges wrong; and whatever discourses give another idea of them, which inclines us to desire them when wanting, to take pleasure in them when obtained, and to condemn those who have them not, are false and deceitful.

Next to being nobly born, nothing raises man higher in the esteem of the world, than valour; nor is there any thing, the repute of which does in a greater degree flatter persons of quality, and touching which, they are more sensible and delicate. A gentleman will suffer any reproach sooner than that of want of courage, because he knows the world has allotted valour the highest esteem, and cowardice the greatest infamy, when found in persons of this condition.

If our task here was only to justify men in this point, it would not be a hard one; for since it is valour that keeps up kingdoms, and makes them formidable to their enemies, it is with reason, since the services of all the valiant men, of whom a state has need, cannot be recompensed with rewards equal to their deserts, that this quality is become honourable; nor has it been in the power of ill-minded men to bring it into disparagement, whatever artifices have been used to set the glorious services of true valour in the most odious light. Honour was ever the recompence of those, who by their courage served their country well: There is therefore some justice in this esteem in relation to men, and consequently some also in relation to God, for he approves all that is just and necessary for the conservation of human societies.

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But because in the esteem we allow valour, we may go beyond the bounds of truth, and by false praises extol in it what deserves no esteem; we must consult what God judges of it, and learn of him what there is in this quality of real and great, and what only appears such by the error and illusion of men.

'Tho' the ladies do not seem to be so much concerned in this subject, as to have it laid before them, yet when we consider what has been the ill consequences of their setting too high a value on this quality in the other sex, and sometimes of inflaming it on every unwarrantable occasion, it will not be found improper to handle it for their sakes, as well as for the mens, whose more immediate concern it is to form a right notion of a thing that is so very much mistaken.

We have in a preceding volume given a hint or two on this head, to which we shall now add :

That valour may be considered two ways: either as a passion, that is, an impression coming from the imagination and body, or as regulated and guided by the will. To consider it in the first place, we may take notice, that as there are some who being raised high above the rest, are not subject to be dazzled, nor feel those weaknesses caused by the force of imagination on such as have not been used to those fearful sights; so there are others who either by nature, or out of custom, are not surprized by the dangers of war; who preserve there the same calmness and presence of mind; who can foresee all, take all advantages; and to whom the sight of an armed enemy inspires new vigour and force to encounter and surmount them, and these are those we call valiant and brave men.

There is no doubt but such a disposition as this deserves our esteem; but while we look on it only in this degree, the imagination and body share more in it than the will. For if in these persons the spirit and blood took some other course, all their valour could not free them

them from fear, as it cannot hinder them from being startled, when from an high place they look down a precipice.

Thus, as God sets no value on any thing in us, which is not voluntary and virtuous, so if he allow that men out of necessity should have allotted valour certain human rewards, yet he will not have them equalise it to the least of those virtues he is the author of. Wherefore the joint valour of all conquerors, considered in this degree, and as only a natural disposition of the imagination, deserves not to be compared to the least motion of grace, which God produces in the heart of some simple women : Because all qualities, purely human, die with man, while the least virtues have effects that subsist to all eternity. The idea therefore which the discourses of the world frame of valour is false, in as much as it exceeds truth, and that in lieu of having it placed among purely human qualities, it raises it above the most spiritual and divine virtues.

But their illusion is infinitely greater in the judgment they pass on valour, considered as voluntary; that is, on the use that is made on it; for they equally esteem those that are accounted brave and valiant, whether their valour be accompanied with justice or injustice, prudence or rashness. Yet what a prodigious difference does truth itself place, between things which man scarce distinguishes? To expose our lives where duty and justice require, and to sacrifice them to God, where he engages us, is an act of so high a generosity, that the Christian religion has nothing that is greater. But to expose them in an ill cause, and so by death rashly thrust ourselves into the hands of an exasperated and omnipotent God, is so prodigious a folly, that we need no greater proof of the blindness of man, than the placing his glory in so senseless an action.

Nay, it often happens, that we bestow most unjustly the name of courage on the weakest part of those actions.

Men



Men do not expose themselves to danger because they slight it, but because they see it not: Their souls are wholly taken up, either by the renown they pretend to, or some other trifle, which filling the whole capacity of the mind, conceals all things else from it. The praises they expect from men cannot spring but from folly, while even the greatest number of those who are truly valiant, look on these actions as marks of a false and bastarda valour: A moment sees them at an end, and an eternal repentance follows them. This vanity is in the devils the object of their laughter, in angels of their indignation, in God of his wrath against a wretched man, who being touched with so little dread of his justice, and ready to fall into his hands, dare affront him with so much insolence, as all do who dare engage in an ill cause; and to distinguish a good from an ill one, is seldom the care of such irregular minds.

Life, the sole good of men, a treasure whose loss is irrecoverable, a price with which eternity is bought, is the thing in the world the most contemned and slighted by those thoughtless heroes, who know as little how to live reasonably in this world, as they are prepared for the next. There is no reward so base or mean, for which some men will not hazard it, and for which at every turn it is not cast away. Men seem to be weary of life, since they seek to be quit of it so rashly, and for so small trifles throw it away. Thus we may discover as a certain truth, that all this false valour which casts men headlong into duels, unjust quarrels, and useless dangers, to which they expose themselves thro' a ridiculous vanity, is nothing else but either a not knowing the value, or forgetting the end of life, a darkening of the soul, which conceals danger, or a foolish and unreasonable assurance of escaping it, or a violent application to some object of our passions; and what is it that deserves our esteem in all this? Is it a sign of an undaunted courage in a deaf man not to startle

startle at the thunder of a cannon? Or in a blind one, not to be moved at the dreadful sight of an enemy? There is no courage in not standing in dread of God Almighty, because nothing but a horrible blindness can be exempt from such a fear. God is so terrible, that when he has a mind to make us sensible of his anger, no fond belief of ours, with which we flattered our guilt, can shelter us from the least of his regards, and even the wicked are forced to cry, in the excess of their consternation, "to the hills, that they fall upon them." How mad then are weak and wretched men, to out-dare God Almighty, tho' for a moment, when he delays his punishment; since they thus run the hazard of being the objects for ever of his rigorous justice, when they cannot at all hinder their coming under the lash?

What then must we think of those bravos the world with so little judgment esteems so much? We must think and judge as God judges, we must approve of those he approves, we must condemn those he condemns, and make the difference between such and such that he does. And as we ought not to deny some those due praises their generosity deserves, so ought we to have for others that just contempt which is due to their brutish valour.

It may be alledged, that there is something more solid and real in the qualities and endowments of the mind, such as are sciences, eloquence, a graceful mien in conversation, address in business, capacity for great affairs, with strength of brain to go thro' with them, and particular prudence in the conduct of our designs, and management of our fortunes. Now the whole value we ought to set on these, consists only in the use we make of, and the end to which we refer them. They are necessary instruments for the employment of life; and hence those who live in the world, lie under an obligation of cultivating them with great care, because they ought to know that since men have assigned them a great value, it is impossible to succeed in any thing without being master of them.

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* But if we separate them from their use, and only consider them in themselves; or as the measures to arrive at some low and temporal end, they lose so much of their esteem and value, that the condition of those who are masters of them, is not at all preferable to that of others who want them. And for this reason it is of the greatest importance, not to be deceived with the vain panegyrics of those that would flatter us on such endowments, as considered in themselves, and separated from the use which might be made of them.

Wit is what men are most ambitious to have the character of, as it gives a kind of superiority of mind, when taken in the best sense; but the very idea we have of what is called a man of parts or wit, is perfectly false; and one of those, in which we most of all ought to disabuse ourselves. For we call wit a certain faculty to learn sciences, to discourse well on what is offered, to manage affairs with address, or to find out some happy means to bring difficult matters to a good conclusion; nothing of which goes to the making up that true light of mind which forms a just wit, since those endowments may be found in those, who, as the scriptures tell us, are blind wretched fools, insensate and void of understanding. What is it then to be a man of wit? Let us judge of it by taking a view of the sight of our body, which is the image of our souls: To see well is to see things such as they are, what is great as great, and what is little as little. Those to whom a mountain shall appear a mole-hill, and a mole-hill a mountain, would be said to be very ill-sighted: They who can conceive things that are great as such, and that with an apprehension full of light and life, and who see things that are little in their natural dimension, without increasing or lessening them by their imagination, are great wits, and men of accurate right judgments. Thus he who said, "He feared God as a swollen sea hanging over his head," and he who said, "Who is like to thee, O Lord, who is like to thee?" and he who said, "The
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"magnificence of God was raised above the winds," was one of a great wit, because God appeared great in his eyes, and he was fully possessed and convinced of his magnificence and greatness. He had then a sight which was clear, and extended far. Thus an infinite number of simple women, who in concerns of this world appear of no parts, are great wits, because to them God shews, and as it were makes himself even to be touched and seen; whereas such as have only a wit to understand a mathematical demonstration, to discourse well, to carry on a negotiation or intrigue, without seeing the things of the next world, under any other dimensions than those of atoms, are but little wits, and deserve no other names than those the scripture affords them, "Of little ones, of simple, without either sight or light." As the idea which is commonly framed of wit, taken as the light of the mind, is false, so that which we have of its strength is no less so: We make it consist in being able to sustain the weight of a great number of affairs, without being dismayed, tired, or confounded with them. Behold, says the world, a strong brain that is able to comply with and manage so great a number of different affairs: But perhaps, on the contrary, we ought to say, what a weak head is this that stands in need of so many employments to sustain and keep it up? and how little vigour has this soul, that wants so many helps to prevent its being dismayed or weary of itself? Take these employments from this man, and you shall presently see him dull and languishing. It is not we that support our affairs, it is they that bear us up; on them we find a bed, on which our souls in their weakness repose. The strength and vigour of a soul consists in being able to continue without these stays, and pleasing itself only with God, and in his presence. If there be any strength in those who are not tired with the tumultuous employments of this world, it is a strength which depends on the organization of the body, not a true strength of the soul.

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It is true, there is something in man that is great, and let him apply his mind to what he pleases, there will always appear some sign of grandeur and excellence. But even from this grandeur proceeds his misery and mean-ness, when he gives his mind to what merits not his application, and neglects those other things which only deserve his careful thoughts and affections. If man were less than he is, all these qualities and endowments would be greater; and they are but mean and little, because he is called to things of a far higher strain, and infinitely more important, which he passes by and neglects, while he too much applies himself to those other.

Science has something in it that looks glaring, but the greatest part of human sciences are so inconsiderable in themselves, and contribute so little to man's felicity, that we are every whit as happy living in ignorance and contempt as in the knowledge and over-value of them. Vanity and opinion set a price on them, and we desire only to be learned for others, not for ourselves. Hence Seneca, all Stoick as he was, confesses that he cared not for wisdom, which was the idol of those of his sect, were he prohibited to discourse of it with others. The whole reward and fruit he desired to draw from thence, was only the praise and approbation he expected to have from others. But as opinion sets the rate on sciences, so does it also debase them when it pleases. Men have been pleased not to judge learning fit for women, and yet men do not think them miserable, nor are they themselves sensible of the want. Some ladies of quality conceal the skill they have in polite literature, as ashamed of it, and they are in the right, for there is always some shame in being burdened with an useless knowledge. If all those of that sex, who have applied themselves to the study of curious sciences, did the like, they would but thence deserve more esteem.

Nevertheless it is true, that some of these sciences are very beneficial to human society, and afford to some great advantages. And for this reason, it has been well
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done to affix to them certain honours and rewards, but for the most part they procure their owners more harm than good.

Let us run over all those we know to have been men of wit and parts in the world, and upon consideration we shall find very few who have not thereby been damaged for the next world: Had not such a one been a man of parts he had never been chosen a bishop; he had never then been charged with the sins of the whole diocese: It is by his good parts that another is raised to a great office, and great employments, and thereby hazards his conscience, thro' a thousand dangerous intrigues. If another had not had an easier utterance, he had never been a preacher, and so not spent his life in an abusive dispensation of God's word. Without parts we press not forward in the world, and by living privately we shun a thousand unfortunate engagements.

But it is not possible to set a value on these endowments, by considering them separately, from the good or bad use that may be made of them. This is necessary to be done, because they are often known, but not the bad use they are put to. However, it is certain that this way of considering them by themselves, without reflecting on the use that is made of them, is the origin of great illusion both to us and others. For these qualities consist not in the air abstracted from their good or bad use; and when they are ill employed they derive no esteem, since they only increase the guilt of those that have them.

The holy scripture only calls that science which teaches us how to live, accounting all that are ignorant of it fools and madmen. Nor would man, were he rational, speak any other language than this; for it is most conformable to reason and nature, and only his blindness has brought another dialect into fashion. Not but that each science teaches some particular truths, but because we stand in so urgent a necessity of that knowledge
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which leads to heaven, we are not permitted to reckon the rest for any thing. Were we in a storm, we should only value that art which might serve us there; and no body ever thought of praising a paper of verses, when the question was, how to avoid a threatened shipwreck. Let a man be sick, he only in his physician values that skill which may cure his disease, all the rest of his good qualities vanish, and are not taken notice of. In a word, all those great concerns, which ought totally to employ and take us up, give us leave only to consider such abilities as may be serviceable to them. But what greater concern can we have, than that of saving our souls, shunning hell and purchasing heaven? What greater and more terrifying danger, than that of perishing eternally? What deserve, more to take up all our thoughts, than the care of preparing for an eternity? It is, therefore against nature and reason, to set so high a price on certain qualities and endowments that contribute nothing to it.

Not is this a mere question about words; things themselves are concerned, since the words carry the things along with them. Were it only about words, it would be a small inconvenience to bestow the name of learned, skilful and men of good parts, on those who might excel in human societies, because in reality, as useless as they are, considered in themselves, they yet continue to be the marks of the greatness of human wit: But we stop not here; to these words we add certain sentiments of our souls, and we always accompany them with an interior judgment of esteem and excellency, we raise those on whom we bestow these names above others, and here they become false and deceitful. For whereas a poet that is no Christian, an eloquent preacher that leads a disorderly life, or an able politician that thinks not on God, are infinitely less estimable than the weakest woman that lives according to his laws; yet, under the favour of these names, we fail not in our own thoughts and imaginations to bestow
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a most eminent degree and place on those persons whom we ought notwithstanding their knowledge and learning, to consider as in the lowest degree of blindness and abjection.

If men are not capable of being spoken to in this language, at least we ought to speak it to ourselves. And thus by judging of things by the relation they have to God and what is eternal, instead of those several conditions and degrees of men in the world, we shall only find two, but those prodigiously different, if we look on them with the eyes of faith, tho' the difference be unknown to sense. One of the classes is made up of the just, the other of sinners. It will be profitable to excite in us the liveliest idea we possibly can have of these two states, to the end it may help to obscure and stifle in our minds all those distinctions which men have established and built among themselves on certain qualities, whether exterior or interior, real or imaginary.

What then does a sinner, and one without God, appear to the eyes of faith, that is, to truth itself? He is one that is blind, because he does not partake of true light, knowing neither God nor himself, his friends nor enemies, good nor evil. Let him be as intelligent as he will in the affairs of this world, yet does he live and walk in darkness, since he blindly falls at every step, and knows not where to place his feet.

He is one that is deaf, since he hears not the voice of God, nor admits to his heart his divine word, tho' it may make a noise in the ears of his body. He is one sick of a palsy, because his heart is without motion, nor aspires up towards God, is always on the ground, and in an utter disability of ever raising it.

He is a man reduced to an extremity of want and beggary, because despoiled of all true riches which are only spiritual. He has lost whatever God bestowed on him in his baptism: To him no more belongs any right to his inheritance, which is heaven.

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He is not only poor as to the riches of grace, but even as to the goods of this world : For though to appearance he is in possession of great wealth, and others have no right to deprive him of it ; yet does he unjustly keep it, as to God. He no more deserves to enjoy it. He is unworthy the use of any of his creatures.

He is a bond-slave, not only to his passions which domineer over him, but to the devil who possesses him, dwells in him, moves, agitates, and makes him do and act as he pleases ; who without ceasing deceives him, and turns him into the subject of his disport and laughter, according to the phrase of holy scripture. Nay, he is a slave of the just, and those God has chosen ; that is, his whole employment during his life, is to labour for the good of others, not for his own ; and to contribute to the good of the elect, without drawing thence any benefit for himself. It is thus the angels and saints look on those who are great and wealthy, who fancy the whole world only made for themselves ; while, on the contrary, God only esteems them made for others ; nor does he permit them to live but for the service of the elect, who are the only masters and kings in his sight, and who will drive them out of their house, when the time shall come that they stand in no more need of them ; “ because the slave does not remain in “ the house of his master.”

A sinner is a man reduced to a shameful nakedness, because he has lost the robe of innocence and justice : Let his magnificence be never so great, with which he endeavours to clothe his ignominy ; his greatness, as Saint Austin says, are but the rags of the devil. These are not only shameful, but over and above great deceivers ; because the devil only lends them, to the end that man fixing there, and making them the object of a ridiculous vanity, he may lose all sense of his true misery, and never endeavour to recover what he has lost. These he will take from him at his death, and make him for all eternity sensible of the nakedness he is reduced to.

A sinner is a man that is dead, and a thousand times more senseless than the dead themselves. His very soul is dead; whereas others die only as to the body; I say, his very soul is dead; nor do I here use any metaphor. The soul only lives by love and knowledge. Thus the love and knowledge (of what is the good of man, that is) of God, is the true life of the soul; and when it loses this love and this knowledge, it loses its true life, though it retains another poor and miserable one, by the love it bears to, and the knowledge it has of the creatures. It is for this reason, that it is said by Wisdom to its children, "Wisdom gives her sons life," because on them it bestows the knowledge and love of God.

The comparison therefore is very natural and exact, which the fathers make between a soul in sin and a moving sepulchre; because the soul being dead, the body that incloses it may in some sort be said to be its grave. And this comparison runs so much the better, in that, as a tomb is adorned without, but filled within with nothing but dirt and corruption; so the sinner, whose outside appears so pleasing and grateful, flattering our senses by these exterior endowments, conceals within so horrible a corruption and stench, that it would prove intolerable, were it laid open to sight.

The dreadful misery of sinners may help us to conceive the inestimable happiness of the just, since we know already, that it is a great good fortune to be freed from so wretched a condition. The just are no more either blind or deaf beggars, or benumbed with palsies: they are no slaves nor naked, nor in a state of death; but they enjoy the light of Almighty God: they, as friends, hear his voice; they raise themselves up towards him, by the motions and sentiments of their hearts; they are possessed of the treasures of grace, and freed from the slavery of the devil and sin; they are clad with the robes of innocency, and live the true life, that is, the life of charity.

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But we must yet make a farther progress, before we can conceive any part of their grandeur, we must say they are kings, being associates in royalty with our Saviour Jesus Christ; that they are lords of the world, since the whole creation continues but for and in relation to them; that they are children of God, since they are adopted for his by being united to his only Son; that they are heirs of heaven, since that is the inheritance of our Saviour, and a right to it has been conferred on them by the pledge of the Holy Ghost, which they have received; that they are the temple of God, since he dwells in them, and that they are animated by his Holy Spirit; that they are members of Jesus Christ, making up part of his body, by the participation of his Spirit.

We must endeavour to imprint in our minds, as deep as we can, these ideas, that we may be able to resist the impressions made *only* by the discourses of men, who fill our heads with conceits of false grandeur, false abjections, false goods and evils: And for this reason it is, the holy scriptures so often raise us up to admire the just. "Blessed are those who are without blame in the ways of God: Blessed are those who sound the depth of his precepts: Blessed is the man who fears God: Blessed is the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked: Blessed, O Lord, are those who dwell in thy house." On the contrary, they endeavour to take from us that esteem we have for all those human qualities which are the usual object of man's vanity. "Let not the wise glory in his wisdom, nor the strong in his strength, nor the rich in his riches; but he that has a mind to glorify himself, let it be in knowing me, in knowing that I am the Lord, who exercise mercy, judgment and justice in the earth: for these are the things that please me, saith the Lord."

The sacred writ proceeds yet farther, and wills us to look on sinners, not only as reduced by sin to a low degree of abjection, but even to a state of annihilation.

Ought we not seriously to consider, that God and his blessed Son command it, that it is an act of grace and highest honour, that we, dust and ashes as we are, are admitted to speak to the eternal God, to run to him as to a father, to lay open our wants, to complain of our burdens, to present our scruples, to beg remedy and ease, support and counsel, health and safety, deliverance and salvation? God has invited us by many gracious promises of hearing us; he has appointed his most glorious Son to be the mediator between us and him, and to make continual intercession for us at the throne of grace; he has put it into the hands of men, to rescind or alter all the decrees of God which are conditional, and concern our estate, whether temporal or eternal, by the power of prayers. The prayers of good men have saved cities and kingdoms from ruin, have raised the dead to life, have stopped the violence of fire, shut the mouths of wild beasts, altered the course of nature, caused rain in Egypt, and drought in the sea. Prayer has made the sun to go from west to east, and the moon to stand still; it has compelled rocks and mountains to walk; it cures diseases without physick; and makes physick do the work of nature, nature do the work of grace, grace do the work of God, and does miracles in accident and event. Though it does all this, it is of itself nothing but an ascent of the mind to God, a desiring of things fit to be desired, and an expression of this desire to God, as we can, and as becomes us. Our unwillingness to pray, is nothing else, but a not desiring what we ought passionately to long for; or if we do desire it, it is a choosing rather to wish our satisfaction and felicity, than to ask for it.

In the exercise of prayer we must be careful that we never ask any thing of God that is sinful, or that directly ministers to sin: for that would be to ask God to dishonour himself, and to undo us. It equally imports us, to consider what we pray for; before it returns in blessing, it must be joined with Christ's intercession, and presented

presented to God: Let us principally ask of God power and assistance to do our duty, to glorify him, to do good works, to live a good life, to die in his fear and favour, and after death to enjoy life eternal. These things God delights to give, and commands that we should ask; wherefore we may with confidence expect to be graciously answered. For these things are procured without any reservation of a second condition: If we ask them, and do our duty towards the obtaining of them, we are sure never to miss them.

We may lawfully pray to God for the gifts of the Spirit that minister to holy ends, such as are the gift of prayer, good understanding, learning, opportunities to publish them, and the like; with these only restraints, that we cannot be so confident of the event of those prayers as of the former; that we must be curious to secure our intentions in these desires; that we may not ask them to serve our own ends, but only for God's glory; and then we shall have them, or a blessing for desiring them. In order to such purposes, our intention in the first desires cannot be amiss, because they are able to sanctify other things, and therefore cannot be unhalloed themselves. We must submit to God's will, desiring him to choose our employment, and to provide for our bodies as he shall see expedient.

Whatever we may lawfully desire of temporal things, we may lawfully ask of God in prayer, and we may expect them as they are promised. Whatever is necessary to our life and being is promised to us, and therefore we may with certainty expect food and raiment. We may be sure of maintenance, but not of our life; for that is promised, not this. Only concerning food and raiment we are not to make accounts by the measure of the desires, but by the measure of our needs. Whatever is convenient for us, pleasant, and modestly delightful, we may pray for it, provided we do it with submission to God's will, without impatient desires, if it be not a trifle and inconsiderable; but a matter so

grave, as to be fit to be treated on between God and our souls. We must not ask it to spend upon our lusts, but for ends of justice, or charity, or religion; and whatever we ask, must be employed with sobriety.

He who would pray with effect, must live with care and piety: For though God gives to sinners the common blessings of life and chance, yet either they want the comfort of those blessings, or they become occasions of sadder accidents to them, or serve to upbraid them with their ingratitude and irreligion; and in all cases they are not the effects of prayer, or the fruits of promise, or instances of a Father's love; for they cannot be expected with confidence, or received without danger, or used without a curse and mischief in their company. But as all sin is an impediment to prayer, so some are a special obstacle to acceptance; such are uncharitableness and wrath, hypocrisy in the present action, pride and lust; because these, by defiling the body or the spirit, or by contradicting some necessary ingredient in religion, such as are mercy, humility, purity, and sincerity, to defile the prayer, and make it a direct sin in the circumstances or formality of the action.

All prayer must be made with faith and hope. We must certainly believe we shall receive the grace which God has commanded us to ask; and we must hope for such things as he has permitted us to ask: Our hope shall then not be in vain, though we miss what is not absolutely promised; because we shall at least have an equal blessing in the demand as in the grant. Therefore former conditions must first be secured: Whatever we ask for must be necessary, or at least good, innocent, and profitable. Our person must be rendered gracious in God's sight, or else what he has promised to our natural needs, he may, in many degrees, deny to our personal incapacity. After our good intentions are secured, we are sure of a blessing; but in what instance we are not yet assured.

Our

Our prayers must be fervent, intense, earnest, and importunate, when we pray for things of high concernment and necessity. "Continuing in prayer, striving in prayer, labouring fervently in prayer, night and day," "praying exceedingly, praying always with all prayer." And this is not at all to be abated in matters spiritual, and of duty; for according as our desires are, so are our prayers; and as our prayers are, so shall be the grace; and as that is, so shall be the measures of glory. But this admits of degrees, according to the perfection or imperfection of our state of life. It has no other measures, but ought to be as great as it can. The bigger the better; we must make no positive restraints upon ourselves. In other things we are to use a bridle; and as we must limit our desires with submission to God's will, so also we must limit the importunity of our prayers, by the moderation and term of our desires.

Our desires must be lasting, and our prayers frequent, assiduous, and continual; not asking for a blessing once and then leaving it, but daily renewing our suits, and exercising our hope, faith, patience, long-suffering, religion, resignation, and self-denial, in all the degrees we shall be put to. This circumstance of duty is taught us by our blessed Saviour himself; "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." But because we cannot always ask several things, and we have also frequent need of the same things, and those such as concern our great interest, the precept comes home to this very circumstance, and Saint Paul calls it, praying "without ceasing;" himself in his own case giving us a precedent: "For this cause I besought the Lord thrice." And so did our blessed Redeemer; "he went thrice" to God on the same errand, with the same words, in a short space, about half a night; for his time to solicit his suit was but short. The Philippians were remembered by the apostle, "always in every prayer of his." And thus we must always pray for the pardon of our sins, for the assistance of God's grace, for charity, for life eternal, never giving

over till we die: And thus also we pray for supply of great temporal needs in their several proportions; in all cases being curious, we do not give over out of weariness or impatience. For God often defers to grant our suit, because he loves to hear us beg it, and has a design to give us more than we ask, even a satisfaction of our desires, and a blessing for the very importunity.

The words of our prayers should be pertinent and grave; material, not studiously many, but according to our need, sufficient to express our wants, and to signalize our importunity. God hears us not the sooner for our many words, but much the sooner for our earnest desire. A long prayer and a short differ not in their capacities of being accepted; for both of them take their value, according to the fervency of spirit, and the charity of the prayer. That prayer which is short, by reason of an impatient spirit, or dulness, or slight of holy things, or indifferency of desires, is very often criminal, always imperfect; and that prayer which is long out of ostentation, or superstition, or a trifling spirit, is as criminal and imperfect as the other in their several instances. This rule relates to private prayer; in publick our devotion is to be measured by the appointed office; and we are to support our spirit with spiritual acts, that our private spirit may be a part of the publick spirit, and accepted into the society and blessing of the communion of saints.

In all forms of prayer, mingle petition with thanksgiving, that you may endear the present prayer and the future blessing, by returning praise and thanks for what you have already received. This is Saint Paul's advice; "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

Whatever we beg of God, let us also work for it, if the thing be matter of duty, or a consequent to industry.

For

For God loves to bless labour and to reward it: Therefore our blessed Saviour in his sermons joins watchfulness with prayer; for God's graces are but assistances, not new creations of the whole habit, in every instant or period of our life. Read the scriptures, and then pray to God for understanding. Pray against temptation, but you "must also resist the devil," and then he "will flee from you." Ask of God competency of living; but you must also "work with your hands the things that are honest, that you may have to supply in time of need." We can but do our endeavour, and pray for a blessing; the success we must leave to God.

We must be careful in all our prayers to attend our present work, having a present mind, not wandering upon impertinent things, not distant from our words, much less contrary to them. If our thoughts do at any time wander, and divert upon other objects, we must bring them back again with prudent and severe arts, by all means striving to obtain a diligent, sober, and composed spirit.

The posture and gesture of our body in prayer ought to be reverend, grave, and humble, both in publick and private, either standing or kneeling, in your ordinary or more solemn prayers; but in your extraordinary, casual, and ejaculatory prayers, the reverence and devotion of your soul, and the lifting up the eyes and hands to God, with any other posture not indecent, is usual and commendable. For we may pray in bed, on horseback, every where, and at all times, and in all circumstances. Some servants have not opportunity to pray so often as they would, unless they supply the appetites of religion with such accidental devotions.

The apostle St. Paul directs, "That prayers and supplications, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, for kings, and all that are in authority; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." We who must "love our neighbours as ourselves," must also pray for them as for ourselves, with this only difference,

that we may enlarge in our temporal desires, for kings and governors ruling in righteousness and the fear of the Lord. We may pray for secular prosperity to them, with more importunity than for ourselves, because they need more to enable them to discharge their duty in government for the interests of religion and justice. This part of prayer is by the apostle called *Intercession*, in which with special care we are to remember our relations, our family, our benefactors, not forgetting to beg pardon and charity for our enemies, and protection against them.

We are not to rely on a single prayer in matters of great concernment, but to make it as publick as we can, by obtaining of others to pray for us: This being the great blessing of the communion of saints, that a prayer united is strong, like a well ordered army, and God loves to be tied fast with such cords of love, and constrained by a holy violence.

Every time that is not seized upon by some other duty, is seasonable enough for prayer, but let it be performed as a solemn duty morning and evening; that God may begin and end all our business, and the "out-goings of the morning and evening may praise him." For so we bless God, and God blesses us. Yet ought we not to fail of taking other opportunities to worship God at some other times of the day; at least by ejaculations and short addresses, more or less, longer or shorter, solemnly or without solemnity, privately or publicly, as you can or are permitted; always remembering, that as every sin is a degree of danger and unsafety, so every pious prayer and well-employed opportunity is a degree of return to hope and pardon.

A vow to God is an act of prayer, a great degree and instance of importunity, and an increase of duty by some new uncommanded instance, or some more eminent degree of duty, or frequency of action, or earnestness of spirit in it. And because it has pleased God, in all ages of the world, to admit of intercourse with

With his servants in matters of vows, it is not ill advice that we make vows to God in such cases, in which we have great need or great danger. In doing which we must observe the following cautions.

That the matter of the vow be lawful; that it be useful in order to religion or charity; that it be grave, not trifling and impertinent, but great in our proposition of duty towards the blessing; that it be an uncommanded instance, that is, that it be of some thing, or in some manner, or in some degree to which formerly we were not obliged, or which we might have omitted without sin; that it be done with prudence, and be safe in all the circumstances of person, lest we beg a blessing and fall into a snare; that every vow of a new action be also accompanied with a new degree and enforcement of our essential and unalterable duty, such as was Jacob's vow, that besides the payment of a tithe, "God should be his God," that so he might strengthen his duty to him first in essentials and precepts, and then in additionals and accidentals. For it is but an ill tree that spends more in leaves, suckers, and gums, than in fruit; and that thankfulness and religion is best that first secures duty, and then enlarges in counsels. Therefore let every great prayer, and great need, and great danger, draw us nearer to God, by the approach of a pious purpose to live more strictly.

And let every mercy of God, answering that prayer, produce a real performance of it. Let not young beginners in religion enlarge their debts and straiten their liberty, by vows of long continuance; nor indeed any one else, without a great experience of himself, and of all accidental dangers. Vows of single actions are safest, and proportionable to those single blessings, ever begged in such cases of sudden and transient importunities. No action, which is matter of question and dispute in religion, should ever become the matter of a vow. He vows foolishly, that promises to God to live and die in such an opinion,

opinion, in an article not necessary nor certain; & that upon confidence of his present guide, binds himself for ever to the profession of what he may afterwards more reasonably contradict, or may find not to be useful, or not profitable, but of some danger, or of no necessity. Solemn promises to God, of new and better obedience, will be great helps to keep the will in awe; and Christians, by such salutary vows, may avoid the falling into errors and snares, which they might not have escaped, had not they been beforehand so guarded against them.

Because even the duty of prayer has in it some special temptations, it is necessary that we be armed by special remedies against them: The dangers are, wandering thoughts and tediousness of spirit.

If we feel our spirits apt to wander in our prayers, and to retire into the world, or to things unprofitable, or vain and impertinent, we must use prayer to be assisted in prayer, for a sober, fixed, and recollected spirit: And when to this you add a moral industry to be steady in your thoughts, whatever wanderings, after this, return irremediably, are a misery of nature and an imperfection, but no sin, while it is not cherished and indulged.

In private it is not amiss to attempt the cure, by reducing our prayers into short forms, making voluntary interruptions, and beginning again, that the want of spirit and breath may be supplied by the short stages and periods.

When we have observed any considerable wanderings of our thoughts, we ought to bind ourselves to repeat that prayer with actual attention, or else revolve the full sense of it in our spirit, and repeat it in all the effects and desires of it: And possibly the tempter may be driven away with his own art, and may cease to interpose his trifles when he perceives they do but vex the person into carefulness and piety, and yet he loses nothing of his devotion, but doubles the earnestness of his care. If this be not seasonable or opportune, or adapted to any man's

man's circumstances, yet be sure with actual attention to say a hearty Amen to the whole prayer, with one united desire, earnestly begging the grace mentioned in the prayer; for that desire does the great work of the prayer, and secures the blessing, if the wandering thoughts were against our will, and disclaimed by contending against them.

We can never pray fervently, frequently, and as we ought to do, unless we avoid multiplicity of worldly affairs; and in those that are unavoidable, labour for an evenness and tranquillity of spirit, that we may be untroubled and smooth in all tempests of fortune. By this means religion will be better tended by us, when we are not torn to pieces with the cares of the world, and seized upon with low affections, passions, and interests.

It helps much to attention in our prayers, if we say them silently, without the voice, only by the spirit: For in mental prayers, if our thoughts wander, we only stand still; when our minds return, we go on again; there is none of the prayer lost, as it is if mouths speak, and our hearts wander.

To incite us to the use of these, or any other counsels that may be given us, we must remember that it is a great indecency to desire of God to hear those prayers, a great part of which we do not hear ourselves: If they be not worthy of our attention, they are far more unworthy of God's.

The other temptation in prayer is tediousness of spirit, or a weariness of the employment; like that of the Jews, who complained that they were weary of the new moons, and their souls loathed the frequent returns of their sabbaths. So do many Christians now, who pray without fervour and earnestness of spirit, meditate but seldom, and that without fruit, or sense, or affection; who seldom examine their consciences, and when they do it, they do it but sleepily, slightly, without compunction, or hearty purpose, or fruits of amendment; they enlarge themselves in the thoughts and fruitions
of

of temporal things, running for comfort to them only in any sadness and misfortune; they love not to frequent the sacraments, nor any the instruments of religion, as sermons, publick prayers, fastings, and the like, but love ease, and a loose undisciplined life; they obey not their superiors, but follow their own judgment when their judgment follows their affections, and their affections follow sense and worldly pleasures; they neglect, or dissemble, or defer, or do not attend to the motions and inclinations to virtue, which the spirit of God puts into their soul; they repent them of their vows and holy promises, not because they discover any indiscretion in them, or intolerable inconvenience, but because they bring with them labour, which, as the case now stands, they are displeased at. They content themselves with the first degrees and necessary parts of virtue, and when they are arrived thither, they sit down as if they were come to the mountain of the Lord, and are not to proceed on to perfection. They enquire into all cases in which it may be lawful to omit a duty, and tho' they will not do less than they are bound to, yet they will do no more than needs must; for what they do is, out of fear and self-love, not out of the love of God, or the spirit of holiness and zeal: The event of which will be this, He who will do no more than needs must, will soon be brought to omit something of his duty, and will be apt to believe less to be necessary than is.

The remedies against this temptation are these: We must order our private devotions so, that they become not arguments and causes of tediousness by their indiscreet length. Let us reduce our words into a narrow compass, still keeping all the matter, and what is cut off in the length of our prayers we should supply in the earnestness of our spirit. For so nothing is lost, while the words are changed into matter, and length of time into fervency of devotion; the forms are made not the less perfect, and the spirit is more, and the scruple is removed.

It is not imprudent if we provide variety of forms of prayer to the same purposes: If we find not our spirits in frame to call upon God with apt petitions, as sudden and necessary occasions require, the change by consulting with the appetites of fancy, may better entertain the spirit; but doubtless those prayers are most acceptable to God, where the heart is wholly engaged of itself, and needs not the assistance of fancy, or any outward helps. However, we may sometimes be pleased to recite a hymn, when a prayer, tho' never so short, would seem flat and unpleasant to us. The soul may be more inclined to be transported with praises than to content itself with prayer: We may be more willing to sing than to say, or to sing this, rather than that. Certain we are, variety is delightful, and whether that be natural to us, or an imperfection, yet if it be complied with, it may remove some part of the temptation.

We should break our office and devotions into fragments, and make frequent returnings by ejaculations and abrupt intercourses with God; for so no length can offend our tenderness and fickleness of spirit; and by often praying in such a manner, and in all circumstances, we shall habituate our souls to prayer, by making it the business of many less portions of our time, and by thrusting it in between all our other employments, it will make every thing of religion relish, and by degrees turn all into its nature.

We must learn to abstract our thoughts and desires from the pleasures and things of this world. For nothing is a direct cure to this evil, but cutting off all other loves and adherences. We are to order our affairs so, that religion may be propounded to us as a reward, and prayer as our defence, and holy action as our security, and charity and good works as our treasure. Let us consider that all things else are satisfactions but to the brutish parts of a man, and that these are the refreshments and relishes of that noble part by which we are better than beasts; and whatever other instrument

strument, exercise, or consideration, is of use to take our loves from the world, the same is apt to place them upon God.

Let us not seek for deliciousness or sensible consolations in the actions of religion, but only regard the duty and conscience of it. For tho' in the beginning most frequently, and at some other times, God complies with our infirmities, and encourages our duty with little overflowings of spiritual joy, and sensible pleasure, and delicacies in prayer, insomuch that we seem to feel some little foretaste of heaven, and great refreshments from the spirit of consolation; yet this is not always safe for us to crave, neither to expect and look for, for when we are disappointed, it is apt to make us cool in our enquiries, and waitings upon Christ, when we want them. It is a running after him not for the miracles but for the loaves, not for the wonderful things of God, and the desire of pleasing him, but for the pleasure of pleasing ourselves. And as we must not judge our devotion to be barren and unfruitful, when we want the overflowings of joy, so neither must we cease for want of them. If our spirits can serve God willingly and readily, out of pure conscience of our duty, it is better in itself and more safe to us.

Let us use to soften our souls with frequent meditation upon sad and dolorous objects, as of death, the terrors of the day of judgment, fearful judgments upon great sinners, strange horrid accidents, fear of God's wrath, the pains of hell, the unspeakable amazements of the damned, the intolerable load of a sad eternity. For whatever creates fear, or makes the spirit dwell in a religious sadness, is apt to melt it, and render it devout and pleasant to any part of duty. For a great fear, when it is ill managed, is the parent of superstition, but a discreet and well-grounded fear produces religion.

Pray often, and you shall pray oftener; and when you are accustomed to a frequent devotion, it will so insensibly unite to your nature and affections, that it will become

become a trouble to you to omit your usual or appointed prayers, and what you obtain at first, by doing violence to your inclinations, at last will not be left without as great unwillingness, as that by which at first it entered. This rule relies not only upon reason derived from the nature of habits, which turn into a second nature, and make their actions easy, frequent and delightful; but it relies upon a reason depending upon the nature and constitution of grace, whose productions are of the same nature with the parent, and increases itself, naturally growing from grains into huge trees, from minutes to vast proportions, and from moments to eternity. But be sure not to omit your usual prayers without great reason (even tho' it might be done without sin) because having often omitted something, in a little while you will be past the scruple of that, and begin to be tempted to leave out more: Keep yourself up to your usual forms and length; you may enlarge when you will, but do not contract or lessen them without a very weighty reason.

Let a man frequently or seriously, by imagination, place himself upon his death-bed, and consider what great joy he shall have for the remembrance of every day well spent, and what then he would give, that he had so spent all his days; he might guess at it by proportions, for it is certain he shall have a joyful and prosperous night, who has spent his days holily, and he resigns his soul with peace into the hands of God, who has lived in the peace of God, and the works of religion in his life-time. This consideration is of a real event, it is of a thing that will certainly come to pass: "It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death comes judgment," the apprehension of which is dreadful, and the presence of it is intolerable; unless by religion and sanctity we are disposed for so venerable an appearance.

Here it may be useful, that we consider the easiness of Christ's yoke, the excellencies and sweetness that are in religion, the peace of conscience, the joy of the Holy Ghost,

Ghost, the rejoicing in God; the simplicity and pleasure of virtue, the intricacy, trouble and vileness of sin; the blessing and health and reward of that; the curses, the sicknesses and sad consequences of this; and that if we are weary of the labours of religion, we must eternally sit still and do nothing; for whatever we do contrary to it, is infinitely more full of labour, care, difficulty and vexation.

Consider this also, that tediousness of spirit is the beginning of the most dangerous condition and estate in the whole world; for it is a great disposition to the sin against the Holy Ghost; it is apt to bring a man to backsliding, and the state of unregeneration, to make him return to his vomit and his sink, and either to make him impatient, or his mind scrupulous, dissatisfied, irksome, and desperate. "It is better that he had never known the way of godliness, than after the knowledge of it, that he should fall away." There is not in the world a greater sign that the spirit of reprobation is beginning upon a man, than when he is habitually and constantly, or frequently weary, and sighs or lothes holy offices.

The last remedy which preserves the hope of such a man, and can reduce him to the state of zeal and the love of God, is a pungent, sad and heavy affliction; not desperate, but recreated with some intervals of kindness or little comforts; or entertained with hopes of deliverance; which condition, if a man shall fall into, by the grace of God he is likely to recover; but if this help him not, it is infinite odds but he will "quench the spirit."

But to speak a little more particularly of this great duty of prayer, which is, as has been said, a speaking to God, and in which there are several parts, according to the different things about which we speak.

The first is confession, and acknowledging our sins to God, whether we only confess in gross as we are sinful, or mention the several sorts and acts of our sin; the former is necessary, and to be always a part of our solemn prayers,

prayers, whether publick or private, the latter is proper for private prayer, and there the oftener it is used, the better. In our daily private prayer, it will be fit constantly to remember some of our greatest and foulest sins, tho' never so long since past; for such we should never think sufficiently confessed and bewailed: This bewailing must always go along with confession, we must be heartily sorry for the sin we confess, and from our souls acknowledge our own great unworthiness in having committed them; for our confession is not intended to instruct God, who knows our sins much better than we ourselves do, but it is to humble ourselves; and therefore we must think we have not confessed aright till that be done.

Petition is the second part of prayer, and the begging of God, whatever we want for our souls or bodies; for our souls we must first beg pardon of our sins, and that for the sake of Jesus Christ, who shed his blood to obtain it; we must then beg the grace and assistance of God's spirit to enable us to forsake our sins, and to walk in obedience to him: for our bodies we are also to pray, and to ask of God the necessaries and conveniences of life.

Deprecating is another part of prayer, in which we pray to God to turn away some evil from us, as the evil of sins, and the evil of punishment, both temporal and eternal: We have already spoken sufficiently of intercession, thanksgiving, and the other parts of prayer; and shall proceed now to shew what miscarriages good Christians may fall into by the neglect of this duty, and that it is as much their interest as their duty.

It was the observation that Origen made of himself, that the day in which he so shamefully fell by sacrificing to idols, he had ventured out in the morning before he had compleated his usual prayers; the devil finding him so unarmed, took the advantage to assault him, as knowing he had then but a single impotent man to wrestle with, who had forfeited (by not invoking) the protection of

of God: And indeed, since prayer is the most powerful exorcism to eject him, we may well conclude, the omission of it is a likely means to invite him; for if God has not the prepossession, if we do not by hearty prayer surrender our souls to him in the morning, they are then all the day after like that empty house in the gospel, a fit receptacle for as many evil spirits to inhabit there. Nor are these spiritual the only dangers that attend us, we are liable to a multitude of secular ones also: Our persons, our fortunes, our reputation, every thing wherein we can receive a benefit, renders us equally capable of a prejudice; and she that fears not to fall into sin, will yet fear the tumbling into a precipice; and tho' she cares not for the spotting of her innocence, would be very loth any accident should blemish her face, disparage her fame, or impoverish her fortune; and yet from any, or all of these, she is utterly unable to guard herself. Thus if piety will not, yet interest methinks should render her an homager to that omnipotent power, from whence alone she can derive her safety.

I wish I could say, that this duty is never easily shaken off; but I fear there are some of those I now speak of, who neglect it in spite of all these inducements, who, tho' they can pretend nothing serious enough to own the name of business, do yet suffer a succession of I know not what impertinencies to divert them: Indeed, were the expence of some ladies days calculated, we should find every hour so full of emptiness, so over-laden with vanities, that it is scarce imaginable where an office of devotion should crowd in.

The morning is divided between sleep and dressing, nor would the morning suffice, but that they are fain to make a new computation to measure it, not by the sun, but by the time of dining, which is often as late as the stationary hours of the primitive fasts, tho' upon a far different motive. The afternoon being by this means reduced, is too short for those many diversions that wait them, and must therefore borrow as much of the night

night as they lent to the morning; and when the mere fatigue of pleasure sends a lady to her rest, it is not imaginable that she will admit devotion, to induce yet greater and more disagreeable weariness. Thus the whole round of her life seems to be a kind of magick circle, in which nothing that is holy will appear: Indeed it is one of the highest stratagems of Satan, thus to forestal their time, and by a perpetual supply of diversions, insensibly steal from them the opportunities of divine offices, an artifice by which he prevails on some who would startle at his grosser and more apparent temptations.

If this habitual neglect of piety should not end at last in great and criminal commissions, as it is naturally very apt to do, yet his interest is sufficiently served by such a customary omission, which amounts to no less than the living "without God in the world;" a state so hopeless, that when the apostle recollects to the Ephesians the wretchedness of the Gentile state, he does it in these very words; and sure those that live under Christianity are not in a better but worse condition, by how much contempt of God is more unpardonable than ignorance.

It is of infinite concern therefore to those who are in danger of so fatal a snare, to look about them, and endeavour to countermine Satan, and be as industrious to secure their duty, as he to supplant it; a very useful expedient to this purpose is to be beforehand with him, I mean to make their devotions the first business of the day, by which are intended, not only those ejaculations wherewith we should all open our eyes, but their more set and solemn prayers. If this be not done 'till some ladies dressings be finished, it will be a half mockery, and a most preposterous request as to the greatest part of the day, which will be past before: And besides the absurdity, there is danger in it, for all the preceding time is, as it were, out-lawed by it, and from under the divine protection. Are God's safe-guards to shine out only with the noon-day sun? Do they suppose the devil

devil keeps their hours, and stirs not abroad till the afternoon, that there is no danger of corporal or spiritual mischiefs before that time of the day? Certainly if the noise of the harp and the viol does not drown it, they may hear a morning as well as evening passing-bell. With how many others does the glass of life run out, while they are at their looking-glasses? and yet what tenure have they in the safety of one moment? What rational expectation can they have of that, when they do not invoke it? Nor are the spiritual dangers less than the corporal, but rather much more; and they must be very slight observers of themselves, if they do not discern that snares may be laid for them in their recesses in their chambers, as well as in places of the most publick resort. Indeed were there no other than what relates to their dress, and its curiosity, it were enough to evidence their danger; scarce any part of that, but a temptation is in it to pride, if it hits right and pleases their fancy; to anger and vexation, if it does not: They had need for this reason to put on their armour before their ornaments, by a prepossession of prayer and meditation, to secure their vitals, lest by an internal death of grace, their bodies in their utmost lustre prove but the painted sepulchre of their souls.

How inverted an estimate do they make of things who postpone the interests of their souls to the meanest of their bodies, pay a supererogating attendance to the one before the other comes at all into their care? But what is yet worse, how vile a contumely is offered to the majesty of God who is used as they do their dunning creditors, posted off with an excuse of no leisure yet to speak to him, while in the mean time, all the factors for their vanity can have ready, free, and full audience? God must attend 'till their tailors or their shoemakers please to dismiss them, and at the last can be allowed only to bring up the rear of a whole shoal of artificers.

It is very doubtful whether he shall obtain so much as that from them, for it may often happen that he shall be quite

quite precluded; so numerous are the parts of a modish equipage, and so exact a symmetry is required in the whole, that it is the business of many hours to complete it. when (as it was said of the Roman ladies) a council is called about the placing of a hair that lies irregularly; when one thing after another shall be tried, and again rejected, as not exact, or not becoming, Time all the while intensibly steals away, and though that will not stay for them, yet, dinner does, and their bellies begin to murmur to pay any longer attendance on their backs, and claim the next turn. Between the two competitors it is odds but devotion will quite be excluded; or reduced only to a grace before meat (and well if that) considering how unfashionable it is grown. In the mean time, what a wretched improvidence is it, to reduce the one necessary business of the day to such uncertainties, nay, almost to a certain disappointment?

Suppose this hazard was only imaginary, and a lady were infallibly sure not to lose the time for her prayers; yet she will be likely, by such preceding diversions, to lose so much of her zeal in them, that if they be said at all, they will scarce be said in a due manner. There is, alas! such a repugnancy in our nature to any thing spiritual, that we cannot close in an instant; but as a benumbed frozen body will need some rubbing and chafing before it can be fit for motion, so our more frozen souls require some previous incitations before they can with any vigour exert themselves in devotion. Now sure such a dressing time as we have been speaking of, which is too common among the ladies, is not very proper for such preparations: it is the contrary, extremely apt to indispose and unfit them; for when the fancy is possessed with so many little images of vanity, they will not easily be ejected; that raving faculty is, God knows, too apt to bring in the remotest diversions: But when it has such a stock ready at hand, how will it pour them in upon the mind, to the great allaying, if not utter extinguishing, of devotion!

When all these considerations are put together, it will sure appear wholesome counsel, that such persons should not trust so important a duty to so many casualties, but in the first place secure a time for that; repair to their oratory before their dressing-room, and by an early consecration of themselves to God, defeat Satan's claims, and discourage his attempts for the rest of the day. We know there is a natural efficacy in a good beginning toward producing a good ending; but in spiritual things the influence is yet greater, because it draws in auxiliaries from above, and engages the yet farther assistances of grace, upon which account one may reasonably believe, that where this duty is performed in the morning, it will not be totally neglected in the succeeding parts of the day; it will be easy to discern the same obligation, the same advantage of closing the day with God, that there was to begin it; and when those two boundaries are secured, when those are looked upon as a strict duty, and constantly observed, it is not unlikely but their piety may grow generous, and, with David, add to the evening and morning a noontday office. Devotion being advanced thus far, will probably go farther, and not keep itself only on the defensive part, but invade its opposites, get daily ground of those vanities by which it was before oppressed; for when a lady has in her closet washed her cheeks with penitential tears, she cannot, when she comes out, think them prepared for the varnish of the paint and fucus; when she has attentively examined her conscience, that impartial mirror, and there discerned all the blemishes of her noble part, she will with somewhat a more cold concern consult her looking-glass; and when she has by pious vows and resolutions "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," it will be impossible for her to be very anxiously careful about her garments. This devout temper of her mind will not let her dream away her time in fantastick scenes, and elaborate nothing, but prompt her to "give all diligence to make her calling and election sure." In a word, when she once understands what

what it is to spend an hour devoutly, she will endeavour to rescue all the rest from trifles and impertinent entertainments, and employ them to purposes more worthy the great end of her being.

But private devotion, though of excellent effect, cannot commute for the omission of publick, nor indeed can it long maintain its vigour, unless sometimes cherished by the warmth of Christian assemblies; and if God pleases to visit them in their closets, they are ever by their own rules of civility obliged to return visits, and attend him in his house: It is to be feared, too many adapt the instance in the formality too, and come as unconcernedly to him, as they do to one another; it is true, those that pay him a cordial reverence at home, will certainly do it at the church; and therefore by the little we see performed by some there, we may fear God sees as little in their retirements. But what do we speak of a hearty reverence, when it is visible that there are those who pay none at all? How rare a sight is it for some ladies to appear at church? How many times (one may almost say hundreds) do we see their coaches at the playhouse, for once at God's? They seem to own no distinction of days, unless it be, that Sunday is their most vacant season to take physick, or to lie a-bed; and if such do ever come to church, devotion is like to be the least of their errand; some new garment perhaps, or dress is to be shewed, and that thought the place where the most critical judges of these things will be most at leisure to observe them; or if they come not to teach new fashions, it may be they come to learn, and such documents will be sure to be put in practice, than any in the sermon; possibly they expect to see some friend or acquaintance there, and as if Christ were to be served as he was born, in an inn, make his house the common rendezvous in which to meet their associates: If they have any more ingenious alternative, it is commonly that of curiosity, to hear some new celebrated preacher, and that rather for his rhetorick than his divinity; and this mo-

tive, though the best of the lot, is but like that which prevailed with the Jews, who came to "Jesus, that they might see Lazarus."

We shall not reckon among these motives, that of hypocrisy and seeming holiness, for from that all the rest do acquit them. This is the only sin which this age has seemed to reform; and that too not by the virtue, but the iniquity of the times. Religion is grown so unfashionable, so contemptible, that none can be now tempted to put on so ridiculous a disguise; Though as to single persons, I confess hypocrisy one of the deepest guilts, such as has a peculiar portion assigned to it by Christ, in the place of torment; yet as to communities, I cannot but think it better to have a face of religion than profaneness; The example of the former may work beyond itself, and a form of goodness in some, may produce the power of it in others; but a pattern of profaneness, the farther it operates, the worse, and all the progress it can make, is from one wickedness to another. It is to be feared, that as Saint Bernard wished for his fever again, so the church may ere long for her hypocrites.

Let us now inquire a little, how those whom the fore-mentioned motives bring to the public worship, behave themselves at it; and that is indeed with great conformity to the ends of their coming: their errand is not to be suppliants, neither do they put themselves in the posture; Kneeling is impertinent for them, who mean not to pray; but, as the apostle describes the idolatrous service of the heathens, "they lay down to eat and drink, and rise up to play; they sit down to talk and laugh, with their bow-bells, and rise up to gaze and look upon their idols." When they should be considering their duty to Almighty God, they are conversing perhaps to one another for the sake of a ceremonious visit, or some other breach of civility: When they should be considering the going of God in the sanctuary, they are inquiring when this lady comes to town, or when that goes

P R A Y E R.

goes out. Nay, probably the theatre is brought into the temple; the last play they saw is recollected, and quotations enough brought from thence to vie with the preacher. It is well if they do not ham an air of the opera, instead of a psalm of David. It is impossible to reckon up all their topicks of discourse, and all their church amusements: indeed it were scandalous for one that reproves them, to pretend to know by how many impertinencies, not to say worse, they profane that holy place and time.

But that all-seeing eye, in whose presence they are, keeps an exact account, and will charge them not only with the principal, but the product; not only with their own irreverences, but with those which by their example or encouragement they have occasioned in others; nay, further, even with that scandal which redounds to Christianity by it. For when one that is to choose a religion shall read the precepts of Pythagoras, injoining that the gods must not be worshipped in passing by as it were accidentally, but with the greatest solemnity and intention: when he shall consider the care of Numa in instructing officers, who, at sacrifices and all divine services, should call upon the people to keep silence and mind their devotion; or even the practice of the present Mahometans, who permit none to sit in their mosques, nor to pray, without prostration: when, I say, this is considered, and compared with the scandalous indecency observed in our churches, he will certainly exclude Christianity from all competition in his choice, not allow it the name of religion, whose very worship appears so profane, and whose votaries mock the God they pretend to serve.

Yet however severe the charge may be against some, I am far from including all under it. There are many ladies whose examples are reproaches to the other sex, that help to fill our congregations when gentlemen desert them. We have had in England a royal example of Christian devotion, whose behaviour at church was so

devout, so humble, so zealous, that she adorned the religion she professed, and now wears the crown of glory in heaven, which is the sure reward of all that so live and so die as she did. Though her train was never failing, she would be so constantly at divine service: And such shining, such exemplary piety, could not but bring religion into repute again with those who think it becomes them to do every thing in imitation of the court. The zeal, the worship of such may probably be too affected; but there are not wanting ladies of the highest rank, who contemn the impertinent trifles of the toilet, and the vain employments of their sex in the morning, making it the first business of the day to seek God with prayer and praise in their closets, and the next to pay him their homage in his own house. To these sometimes we alone owe, that our churches are not furnished, like the feast in the parable, out of the "highways and hedges, with the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind." Yet some of these too may be liable to some irregularity, which may be the effects of inadvertency or mispersuasion, though not of contempt or profaneness.

In some it is observable, that though they come constantly, yet they come not early, by which means a considerable part of the prayers is over, before they enter the church. This causes disturbance to others, the successive entry of new comers keeping the congregation in a continual motion and agitation; which how unagreeable it is to devotion, Numa, a pagan prince, may teach us. Plutarch tells us, he took a particular care, that, in the time of divine worship, no knocking, clapping, or other noise, should be heard; as well knowing how much the operations of the intellect are obstructed by any thing that importunes the senses. What would he have said, should he come into one of our city congregations, where often, during the whole time of prayer, the clapping of pew-doors does outnoise the reader.

But,

But, besides the indecency of the thing, and the interruption it gives to others; it is very injurious to themselves; a kind of partial excommunication of their own inflicting, which excludes them from part of the divine offices, and from that part too which is of the most universal concern, the confession of their sins; which the wisdom of our church has fitly placed in the beginning of her service, as a necessary introduction to all the rest. And even in separate congregations, the coming of people successively after prayer is begun, distracts the mind both of the minister and his auditory, shews a negligence in those that do it, and gives offence to those that see it. It will much better become them to anticipate the time, "to wait at the posts of the doors," and contrive to be at the publick worship before prayer begins; that so, by previous recollection, they may put their minds in a fit posture of address at the publick audience; which by the way speaks it to be no very laudable custom which almost universally prevails, that those few who do come early spend the interval before service in talking with one another, by which they do not only lose the advantage of that time for preparation, but convert it into the direct contrary, and thereby actually unfit and indispose themselves. Our hearts, in their most composed temper, are too apt to create diversions; we need not start game for them to chase, and by prefacing our prayers with secular discourse, make room for the same thoughts to return upon us in them. Besides, in relation to the place, it has a spice of profaneness, it is the bringing the Moabite and Ammonite into the temple; a kind of invasion on God's property, by introducing our worldly concerns of diversions into the house which is called by his name, solemnly dedicated to him, and therefore dedicated that it might be his peculiar. We may to such, with a little variation, apply the expostulatory reproof of the apostle to the Corinthians, "What have ye not houses to talk and converse in, or despise ye the church of God?" This, I

confess, is a reproof that will not reach to many, there being so few of the letter sort who come early enough to talk before service. And as for those who talk ^{but} it, we have already ranked them under another class. Those fall not much short of that degree of profaneness, who come late only because they are loth to rise, or abate any thing of the curiosity of their dress: For she who prefers her sloth or vanity before God's service, is like, how decently soever she behaves herself, to give but an insignificant attendance at it.

This may in many proceed from another cause, which, though less ill in their intentions, is not so in respect either of its unreasonableness or its effects; and that is, an unequal estimate they make of the parts of God's service. Some are so very partial to the sermon, that the prayers seem, comparatively, despicable in their eyes. Sure these do not understand their energy aright, and think that having them by rote, they need not pour forth their hearts with them, as often as they are offered unto the throne of grace. If these can but come time enough before the preacher begins, they think they have discharged the weightier part of the law, and of their own duty. This mis-persuasion, though it has too generally diffused itself through both sexes, yet seems to have been very especially imbibed by the female. And besides the evidence that Sundays give, the week-days afford no less. Let there be a lecture, though at the remotest part of the town, what hurrying is there to it? but let the bell toll never so long for the canonical hours of common prayer, it will not call the nearest of the neighbourhood. Now God certainly intendeth harmony in all sacred ordinances, and would not have one part set up against another, but mutually assist each other's operation upon us. Thus prayer disposes us to receive benefit, by preaching, and preaching teaches us how to pray aright; and God grant we may long enjoy the opportunities of both; That Popery may never swallow up preaching in a sleep of superstitious orisons, nor Fanaticism

Y^eticism break in upon divine service, with tedious lectures of enthusiasm and impertinence. Since this age has brought prayer and preaching to a competition, I must take leave to say, that if we come impartially to weigh them, the balance will incline another way than it seems with many to do; and we shall find prayer the most essential part of Religion.

The end of preaching is either to teach us what we know not, or excite us to practise what we already know. Now in relation to our being taught what we know not, I suppose there is a wide difference between preaching at the first promulgation of the Gospel, and now. It was then the only way of revealing to the world the whole mystery of our salvation; wherefore the apostle's inference was then irrefragable, "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" But where Christianity is planted, and the New Testament received, we have therein the whole doctrine of Christ. Nay, we have not only the matter, but the very form of many of those sermons which Christ and his apostles preached. Unless therefore we think them not sufficiently gifted, we cannot but acknowledge, we have in them ample instruction, both for faith and manners; enough, as Saint Paul says, "to make us wise unto salvation." And the reason of there being a considerable part of our church service, we have the most genuine preaching, even before the minister ascends the pulpit. Besides, for the help of those whose youth or incapacity disabls them from making collections thence for themselves, our church has epitomized the most necessary points of belief and practice in the Catechism, not as the Popish, to preclude their farther search, but to supply them in the interim, till they are qualified for it; and by that early infusion of Christian principles, to procure them of that knowledge which is simply necessary to their salvation.

Now certainly, to people in this state, preaching is not of so absolute a necessity, in respect of instruction, as

it was for those, who from heathenism and idolatry were to be brought, first to the knowledge, and then to the faith of Christ. Thus we seem now to be more generally concerned in the other end of preaching; the exciting us to practice. Alas! there are few of us who rumble on sin for want of light, but either through heedlessness, or want of looking before us, or else by a wilful prostration of ourselves to it: Wherefore we often need to be roused out of our negligence, to be frightened out of our stubbornness; and by a close application of those truths we either forget or suppress, being animated to our duty. To this end preaching is doubtless of excellent use, and the nauseating of it shews a very sick constitution of mind; yet the over-greedy desire may be a disease also. He who eats more than he can concoct, does not so much assist as oppress nature; and those that run from sermon to sermon, that allow themselves no time to chew, much less to digest what they hear, will sooner confound their brains than mend their lives. Often it betrays them to a very pernicious delusion; it diverts them from many of the practical parts of piety, and yet gives them a confidence that they are extraordinary pious, and through their belief that religion consists principally in hearing, they forget to try themselves by that more infallible text, "the doing God's will." Whereas God never designed preaching for more than a guide in their way, they make it their way and their end too; and hearing must, like a circle, begin and terminate in itself.

We should, in secular concerns, think him a very unprofitable servant, that after his Lord had given him directions what to do, should be so transported with hearing his instructions, that he should desire to have them infinitely repeated, and so spend the time wherein he should do the work. And we have reason to think, God will make the same judgment of those who do the like in his service.

One would now think, that this ravenous appetite of hearing should supersede all niceness in it; yet we find it does not, but that some make a shift to be at once voracious and squeamish. If this spiritual food be not artificially dressed, it is too gross for their palates. The phrase must be elegant, the words well accented; and the enticing words of mens wisdom, which St. Paul disclaims in his preaching, is that which they principally regard. The memory of the preacher becomes often the most material part of the sermon, and the first glance on his book prejudices him. I need not add the extravagances of an uncouth tone, a furious vehemence or fantastick gesture, in which the soul and vital efficacy of preaching have been solemnly placed. Not that a decent action is to be condemned: It being certain, that the lifeless, motionless gesture of the generality of preachers, is the occasion that many of their sermons, miss of their intended effect. But it is evident that all these accomplishments are mere trifles, and that those who insist so much on them, make preaching much less sacred and divine than indeed it is. Therefore they cannot, without absurdity, lay the main stress of religion upon it; or make that the highest of God's ordinances, which owes all its gratefulness with them to the endowments of men. Some may think I pursue this subject too far. It is not however done with design to derogate from the just respect due to preaching; only I would not have it monopolize our esteem, or jostle out another duty, which is of more constant use and indispensable necessity.

Such certainly is prayer, that respiration of the soul which is so necessary that it admits not of long intermission, and for that reason seems to carry the same proportion to hearing, which breathing does to eating: We may make long intervals of feeding and yet subsist, but if we should do so in breathing we cannot recover it. Prayer is like the morning and evening sacrifice under the law, which God ordained should be perpetual;

whereas preaching is but like the reading in the Synagogue, on sabbaths and festivals. However we have confounded the terms, it is prayer only that can properly be called the worship of God; it is that by which we pay him solemn homage, acknowledge his sovereignty and our own dependence. When we hear, we do no more than what every disciple does to his master; but when we pray, we own him as the spring and source of all the good we expect, as the author of our being and the object of our adoration. In a word, we do by it profess him to be our God, it being an impress of mere natural religion to supplicate the deity we acknowledge.

As by prayer we render the greatest honour to God, so also do we procure the greatest advantages to ourselves. Prayer is the powerful engine by which we draw down blessings, the key which lets us into the immense storehouse of the Almighty, and that upon which the efficacy of preaching depends. It enlivens and animates our most sacred actions. God has promised his spirit to none but those that ask it: accordingly in scripture we find it still a concomitant in all ecclesiastical concerns. Our blessed Saviour himself, tho' he "knew" "what was in man," and needed no guide but his own omniscience in his choice, yet we find that before his election of the twelve apostles, he continued a whole night in prayer; which was doubtless to teach us how requisite prayer is in all our important concern; which, like the pillar of cloud and fire to the Israelites, is our best convoy through the wilderness, through all the snares and temptations, through all the calamities and distresses of this world, and our most infallible guide to the land of promise.

When all these are the properties of prayer, tho' private, they will not less belong to the publick. Such a conpiration and union of importunate devotion, must have a proportionable increase in its effect. And if heaven can suffer violence by the fervour of one single votary, with what storms, what batteries will it be forced

forced by a numerous congregation? We find the church by Christ compared to an "army of banners;" but fine never is this army in so good array; in so invincible a posture as upon its knees. Ecclesiastical History tells us of a legion of Christians in Aurelius's camp, who in that posture discomfited two assailants at once, the enemy and the drought: That breath which they sent up in prayers, like a kindly exhalation, returned in rain, and relieved the perishing army. And had we but the same fervour, and the same innocence, could we lift up as pure hands as they did, there would be no blessing beyond our reach; but the less any of us find ourselves so qualified, the more need we have to put ourselves among those that are.

There is an happy contagion in goodness; we may perhaps be kindled like green wood by the neighbouring flame; the example of another's zeal may awaken mine; however there is some advantage in being in the company; those showers of benediction which their prayers bring down, are so plentiful, that some drops at least may scatter upon those about them. From all these considerations, the necessity and benefit of publick prayer cannot but be made evident, and consequently the unreasonableness of those, who upon any pretence neglect it; and it is a farther incitement to it, that by our sincere and honest prayers, we are sure to obtain strength and assistance from God, to enable us to vanquish and subdue our lusts, he having promised to give his holy spirit to every one that asks it. Besides this, by a constant and secret devotion, our hearts will be filled with such an over-awing sense of God, that in all our actions we shall dread and revere his authority, and be ready to tremble at every thought of offending him; for there is nothing gives us such a quick sense of God as prayer, that being the most immediate address that we can make to him, and the highest elevation of our souls towards him; for we are a sort of beings that are akin to two worlds, being placed in the middle between heaven
and

and earth, as the common center in which these distant regions meet: By our superior faculties, we hold communion with the spiritual world, and by our inferior with the corporeal one: but to this sensible or corporeal world, we lie open and bare, all its objects being present to us, and striking immediately on our senses; whereas, between us and the spiritual world, there is a cloud of sensible things which interrupts our prospect of the clear heaven above them. Thus, before we can perceive that which is divine, we must remove this world out of the way, and withdraw our souls from those thoughts and desires, in which these lower things have entangled them, that so we may lie open to the heavenly light, and our cold affections may be immediately exposed to the enlivening warmth of the sun of righteousness. From hence arises the necessity of holy meditations and devout prayers, the one being necessary to abstract our minds from the objects of corporeal sense, and the other to inspire our affections with the love of those things which are above; by the one we are disposed in our minds, and by the other in our choice of the better world; for prayer does naturally sublimate our gross and earthly passions, and by keeping our minds intent upon God, it wings our affections towards him, and animates them with divine fires; we never rise from our knees, after a devout address to God, without deriving a magnetic virtue from him, and being sensibly touched with his charms and attractions; if therefore we do but inure ourselves to fervent prayer, these holy affections which we should suck in with our devotions, would be instrumental to extinguish our vicious inclinations, and we should go every day to the throne of grace, with such a lively sense of God, and such a vigorous relish of divine things, as would be sufficient to antidote us all against the venom of any single contagion. If we are in good earnest, and seriously intend the mortification of our lusts, let us every day, before we go into the world, be seasoning of our minds with holy devotions, and while

While we are addressing to God in the devout sense of his unbounded perfections, and of our dependence upon him, let us pour out our souls before him, and make an hearty oblation of our souls and bodies to him; let us offer up our wills to him broken and contrite, that he may put them into what form and posture he pleases; shew him our heart, that quits all interest in itself, and that would be only led and conducted by him; tell him, that you are sensible, that to mortify your lusts, is far more difficult than to resolve to do it; and beseech him to enable you to be valiant in your actions, as thro' his grace you are already in your minds; that you may with as much certainty, if not with as much ease, do and effect, as you have projected and resolved. And having implored his aid, and sincerely offered up yourselves to him, you have laid a strong engagement upon him not to abandon you; he will never throw away a heart that puts itself thus humbly into his hands, nor suffer the devil to make a prey of that which has been so affectionately devoted to him. For it was by the concurrence of his grace with our own faculties, that this resolution of submission to him was begotten in us; and can we think that the father of love will ever abandon his own offspring while it cries out to him, and with pitiful and bemoaning looks implores his aid and compassion? Surely this cannot chuse but move his fatherly bowels, and make them yern and turn towards it; and by a strong sympathy draw his compassionate arm to aid and relieve it. Let us therefore but faithfully use our own endeavours, and fervently implore every grace, and he will then never suffer that divine fire, which he has kindled within us, to be extinguished by our corruptions, but will kindly cherish it with his own influence, and touch it with a ray darted from himself, till it has burned thro' all that rubbish that oppresses it, and till it rises into a victorious flame.

When we consider prayer as a part, as an instrument of holiness, and a remedy against temptation, what is there

there that a Christian should more delight in the exercise of than in this heavenly duty?

It is an acknowledgment of God's being our God, a confession of his majesty and our meanness, by a solemn adoration and worship of him; it is a sacrifice of praise to him; an act of humiliation, repentance, faith, and reliance upon him. We may hence infer, what preparation of soul is necessary to a right discharge of this duty. I shall not enter into a debate of the meetness and excellence of a form of prayer above prayer extempore. It is not to be questioned, that either of them coming from the heart, will be acceptable to God. Those who are apt to fly into a rapturous confusion, and rather take delight in hearing themselves pray, or imagining that others delight to hear them, are certainly in the right to prevent this temptation, by making use of a form, and those who have more command of their minds, have more seriousness and calmness, as well as sincerity of spirit, will surely find great relief in the judicious compositions of pious and learned men; not that one would discourage such, as under an impatience of pouring out their whole souls before God, express these holy sentiments in their own words, provided they do it with prudent as well as fervent zeal.

Prayer is as well an instrument as a part of holiness: It exercises all our graces and refines, and improves them by exercise. The breathing of the divine spirit, which is in an extraordinary manner assistant in this holy exercise, fill the minds of men with joy, peace, and hope, which confirm them in their Christian warfare, and make them disrelish all the pleasures of a sinful life. But what can be a greater encouragement to us in the discharge of this duty, than the extraordinary promises annexed to it, of receiving whatever we ask with faith? "Ask, and it shall be given to you."

Prayer, as it is an antidote against temptation, possesses the soul with an awe of the divine majesty, with a sense of his unspeakable love, and with a horror against sin; while we enumerate his benefits and our sins with all the aggravating circumstances. And certainly no man can be so senseless, as to repeat those sins which he did just now bemoan and abhor, renounce and resolve against before God; nor will it be easy for him to fail, who comes forth forewarned, and armed to encounter a temptation. Prayer also convinces a man of the loveliness and happiness of a holy life; for he finds that his peace and reliance grow up and decay together with his virtue.

If we prayed earnestly and often, how humble, how lowly, how heavenly and exalted would our souls be! With what glorious notions of the divine majesty, what dreadful apprehensions of sin, what an unquenchable thirst of holiness, what fears and jealousies of the world and flesh, would our spirits be possessed? And what a mighty influence would all this have upon our conversation? How humbly, how wailly, how uprightly should we walk!

But when I do not pray often, or with this care and preparation, how lazy and careless is my life? How dim and imperfect my conceptions? How flat and tasteless my relish of spiritual things? How does a worldly sensual temper grow and increase upon me, and the divine life within droop and languish!

Having said something of a form of prayer, and much more of the duty and necessity of prayer, we shall close this subject with a petition to Almighty God, which may be of use both to us and our readers, if said with a due frame of spirit:


“ O my God, give me grace to be fervent and frequent in prayer; assist me by thy spirit, to dress and prepare my soul for this more solemn approach to thee; and then I shall experience this to be the high-
“ way

" way of commerce with heaven. I shall feel the wind
 " blowing upon the garden of my heart, and the spirit
 " flowing forth; I shall feel the spirit fanning that
 " spark of holy life till it be kindled into a flame, and
 " I shall feel myself transported, and ascending up
 " above this vain world, and all the allurements of it.
 " O grant me therefore, O my God, thy holy spirit,
 " that I may pray with understanding and fervency;
 " that my prayer may not be the sacrifice of fools, and
 " turned into sin, but an acceptable sacrifice to thee,
 " an instrument of holiness, and a guard against sin,
 " exalting me to fight the good fight of faith, that I
 " may receive an everlasting crown: And all for the
 " sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."





F A S T I N G.


 Fasting be considered in itself, without relation to spiritual ends, it is a duty no where enjoined or advised; but Christianity has to do with it, as it may be an instrument of the spirit, by subduing the lusts of the flesh, or removing any hindrance of religion: And it has been practised by all ages of the church, and advised in order to prayer, mortification of bodily lusts, and repentance. The rules for the right practising this duty are as follow. Fasting, in order to prayer, is to be measured by the proportion of the times of prayer; that is, it ought to be a total fast from all things during the solemnity, unless an unavoidable necessity intervene. Thus the Jews ate nothing upon the Sabbath-Day till their great offices were performed, which was about the sixth hour: and St. Peter used it as an argument, that the Apostles in Pentecost were not drunk, because it was but the third hour of the day, of such a day in which it was not lawful to eat or drink till the sixth hour. The Jews were offended at his disciples, for plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath Day, early in the morning, because it was before the time in which by their customs they esteemed it lawful to break their fasts. In imitation of this custom, and in prosecution of the reason of it, the Christian Church has religiously observed fasting before the holy communion; and the more devout persons, tho' without any obligation at all, refused to eat or drink till they had finished

 their

their morning devotions: And farther yet, upon days of publick humiliation, which are designed to be spent wholly in devotion, and for the averting God's judgments, if they were imminent, fasting is commanded by the church, together with prayer; to this end, that the spirit might be clearer and more angelical, when it is quitted in some proportion from the load of flesh.

Fasting, when it is in order to prayer, must be a total abstinence from all meat, or else an abatement of the quantity. For the help which fasting yields to prayer, cannot be procured by changing flesh into fish, or milk meats into dry diet, but by turning much into little, or little into none at all, during the time of solemn and extraordinary prayer.

As fasting is instrumental to prayer, it must be attended with other aids of the like virtue and efficacy, such as are removing for the time all worldly cares and secular businesses; and therefore our blessed Saviour includes these together in the caution, "Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this world, and that day overtake you unawares." To which add alms, for upon the wings of fasting and alms holy prayer infallibly mounts up to heaven.

When fasting is intended to serve the duty of repentance, it is then best chosen when it is short, sharp, and effective; that is, either a total abstinence from all nourishment, according as we shall appoint or be appointed, during such a time as is separated for the solemnity and attendance upon the employment: Or we may extend our severity beyond the solemn days, and keep our anger against our sin, as we keep our sorrow, always in readiness; we should often refuse a pleasant morsel, and abtain from the bread of our desire, and only take wholesome and less-pleasing nourishment; we should vex our appetite by refusing a lawful satisfaction, since in its petulancy and luxury it preyed upon unlawful delights.

Fasting,

Fasting, when designed in order to repentance, must be ever joined with an extreme care that we fast from sin; for, there is no greater folly or indecency in the world, than to commit that for which I am now judging and condemning myself. This is the best fast, and the other may serve to promote the interest of this, by increasing our dislike of sin, and multiplying arguments against it.

He that fasts for repentance, must, during that solemnity, abstain from all bodily delights, and deny even the innocent cravings of his appetites; for it is a ridiculous inconsistency for a man to be at once mourning and merry, at once chastening and delighting himself, to have a silence in his kitchen and music in his chamber, to judge the stomach and feast the other senses.

I deny not but a man may, in a single instance punish a particular sin with a proper instrument. If a man has offended in his palate, he may chuse to fast only; if he has sinned in slothness and his touch, he may chuse to lie hard or work hard, and use sharp instructions. But tho' this discipline be proper and particular, yet because the sorrow is of the whole man, no sense must rejoice, or be with any study or purpose trailed and entertained softly. This rule is intended to relate to the solemn days appointed for repentance, publicly or privately; besides which, in the whole course of our lives, even in the midst of our most festival and freer joys, we may sprinkle some single instances and acts of self-condemning or punishing, as to refuse a pleasant morsel, or a delicious draught, with a tacit remembrance of the sin that then returns to displease our souls. And tho' these actions be single, there is no indecency in them, because a man may abate of his ordinary liberty and old freedom with great prudence, so he does it without singularity in himself, or trouble to others; but he may not abate of his solemn sorrow; that may be caution, but this would be softness, effeminacy and indecency.

Fasting being intended as an act of mortification, to subdue a bodily lust, as the spirit of fornication, or the fondness of strong and impatient appetites, it must not be a sudden sharp and violent fast, but a state, a course of fasting, a daily lessening our portion of meat and drink, and a chusing such a coarse diet as may make the least preparation for the lusts of the body. He who fasts three days without food, will weaken other parts more than the ministers of fornication; and when the meats return as usually, they also will be served as soon as any: In the mean time they will be supplied and made active by the accidental heat that comes with such violent fastings, for this is a kind of aerial devil. The prince that rules in the air is the devil of fornication, and he will be as tempting with the windiness of a violent fast, as with the flesh of our ordinary meal. But a daily subtraction of the nourishment will introduce a less busy habit of body, and that will prove the more effectual remedy.

This devil is not to be cured by fasting only, tho' it helps much towards it; it must not therefore be neglected, but assisted by all the proper instruments of remedy against this unclean spirit, and what it is unable to do alone, it may effect in company with other instruments, and God's blessing upon them.

All fasting, for whatever end it be undertaken, must be performed without any opinion of the necessity of the thing itself, without censuring others; with all humility, in order to the proper end, and just as a man takes physick; of which no body has reason to be proud, and no body thinks it necessary, but because he is in sickness, or in danger and disposition to it.

All fasts, ordained by publick authority, are to be observed in order to the same purposes to which they are enjoined, and to be accompanied with actions of the same nature, just as it is in private fasts; for there is no other difference, but that in publick our superiors chuse for us what in private we chuse for ourselves.

Fasts.

Fasts, ordained by lawful authority, are not to be neglected because alone they cannot do the thing for which they were enjoined. It may be, one day of humiliation will not obtain the blessing, or alone kill the lust, yet it must not be despised if it can do any thing towards it. An act of fasting is an act of self-denial, and though it does not produce the habit, yet it is a good act.

All Christians having the rule before them, and conscience being very delicate in matters of worship, it were to be wished that as little burdens as possible were laid on them, in such solemn matters as fasts are. When such solemnities are politically appointed, to give a colour to the conduct of designing mens actions, it is a mocking of God Almighty, it is a national sin, and may perhaps draw down a national judgment. The occasion of publick fasts should not only be lawful but apparent, and in some measure necessary, to oblige sincere Christians to the strict observance of them. If they are appointed partially, and more out of policy than piety, which will easily be distinguished by religious persons, conscience will not think itself tied up to apply the exercise of this duty to the pretended occasion of it. But perhaps holy men and women may think that very occasion sufficient to demand it of them, and to fast even for that sin of fasting.

When the principal end why a fast is publicly prescribed, is obtained by some other instrument in a particular person, as if the spirit of fornication be cured by the right of marriage, or by a gift of chastity, yet that person so eased is not freed from the fasts of the church by that alone, if these fasts can prudently serve any other end of religion, as that of prayer, of repentance, or of mortification of some other appetite. For when it is instrumental to any end of the spirit, it is freed from superstition, and then we must have some other reason to quit us from the obligation, or that alone will not do it.

When

F A S T I N G.

When the fast publickly commanded, by reason of some disposition in the particular person, cannot operate to the end of the commandment, yet the binding offence, and the complying with publick order, is reason enough to make the obedience to it necessary, when it is visible that it was intended to a good end. For he who is otherwise not obliged, as when the reason of the law ceases as to his particular, yet remains still obliged if he cannot do otherwise without scandal; but this is an obligation of charity, not justice.

All fasting is to be used with prudence and charity; for there is no end to which fasting serves, but may be obtained by other instruments, and therefore it must by no means be made an occasion of scruple, or become an enemy to our health, or be imposed upon persons that are sick or aged, or to whom it is in any sense uncharitable, such as are wearied travellers; or to whom, in the whole kind of it, it is useless, such as women with child, poor people, and little children. But in these cases the church has made provision, and inserted caution into her laws, and they are to be reduced to practice according to custom, and the sentiments of prudent persons, with great latitude, and without niceness and curiosity; having this in our first care, that we secure our virtue, and next that we secure our health, that we may the better exercise the labours of virtue; lest out of too much austerity we bring ourselves to that condition, that it be necessary to be indulgent to softness, ease, and extreme tenderness.

Let not intemperance be the prologue or epilogue to your fast, lest the fast be so far from taking off any thing of the sin, that it be an occasion to increase it. Wherefore when the fast is done, be careful that no supervening act of gluttony, or excessive drinking, unhallow the religion of the past day; but eat temperately, according to the proportion of other meals, lest gluttony keep either of the gates to abstinence.

If

It is matter of great lamentation, to see the abuses that are committed in the exercise of Christian duties; and none is more abused than this of religious fasting. It is reduced almost wholly to mere form and show, and the mode of each only changed from flesh to fish. Can these hypocrites believe they can deceive God by his change? That a pompous regale, for which the meats at land, and the dishes of the sea, have been curiously searched to furnish fuel for the flame of their luxury, will be deemed in obedience to the fasting that is required of us? If they would but seriously consider what it is to do daily with the living God, they would renounce such damnable hypocrisy, and repent them heartily of a sin which they flatter themselves. (So strong is sin to them) will pass for repentance. The variety, richness of their fat dishes, excite and inflame that lust which their fasting was enjoined to mortify, the pretended cure feeds the disorder, and the antidote increases the poison. This is not only a crying sin among Papists, but too much practised by Protestants, and is grown so common, that it is hardly thought to be sinful. But its being common, will be far from exempting the guilt, or lessening the punishment, any more than the company of the damned will be a mitigation of their torment.

As for those who fast solemnly and sincerely, and not in compliance to custom, and to avoid scandal, great are the benefits they receive by the religious use of this Christian exercise. He who undertakes to enumerate them may, in the next place, also reckon all the benefits of physick. For fasting is not to be commended as a duty, but as an instrument; and in that sense no man can reprove or undervalue it, who knows either spiritual joys or spiritual necessities. By the doctors of the church it is called, the Nourishment of prayer, the Restraint of lust, the Wings of the soul, the Diet of the angels, the Means of humility and self-denial, the Purification of the spirit. The paleness and meagreness

ness of the visage, which is consequent to the daily fast of great mortifiers, is by one of the fathers, said to be the mark in the forehead, which the angel observed when he signed the saints in the forehead, to escape the wrath of God. "The soul which is greatly vexed, which goeth stooping and feeble, and the eyes that fail, and the hungry soul, shall give thee praise and righteousness, O Lord."

Not to build more on the holy suggestion of the good father than reason and religion will warrant, it is certain that fasting was the universal practice of the Christian church in all ages; that our Saviour has prescribed rules concerning it, which supposes plainly enough, that it is not a practice left indifferent, to be omitted or complied with at pleasure, though it is a free-will offering, and so dependent of various circumstances, that the exercise of it cannot be fixed by particular rules; besides, the constant practice of the devoutest men, the nature of this body we are clothed with, and the frequent sins to which the lusts of it have betrayed us, make it highly reasonable and necessary that we should be often exercising ourselves in this discipline, either in order to our mortification and our future security, or as an act of affliction or revenge for our past faults.

Whoever totally neglects it, upon pretence of the ill effects it has upon either body or mind, ought well to be assured that the uneasiness of the one or the other be not the effect of a wanton and carnal mind, rather than of the temper of the body, and that this body will admit of no degrees of this spiritual discipline; otherwise he is obliged to it according to his capacity.

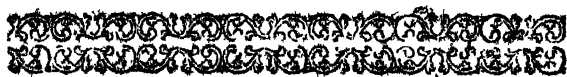
To fasting must always be joined alms and prayer. It must never have the least mixture of vain-glory. What then will become of all the fashionable fasts that at certain seasons make so much shew in great houses? Without alms fasts are insignificant; with vain-glory they are sinful: But if any just reason disables any man to give alms,

(alm), or to devote the day intirely to religious exercises it cannot be thought but that fasting may be used as an act of affliction, provided it be consecrated to God by a holy attention at least.

Let every good Christian, who practises this needful injunction of Christ's church, call then upon God for his blessing.

“ O glorious God, I see in what a world I live, and
 “ what a body this soul of mine dwells in; how little
 “ fire kindles those lusts which blast its innocence, and
 “ destroy my peace. I remember how often I have be-
 “ haved myself unbefitting a child of God, only to
 “ gratify the inclination of an ungovernable body. En-
 “ able me therefore so to mortify and subdue it, that I
 “ may enjoy an istue peace and conquest; so to humble
 “ and afflict it, that my revenge may testify the sorrow
 “ I feel for my misdeemeanours, and accept thou my
 “ sorrow to the atonement of my sin, through the blood
 “ of Jesus Christ. Amen.”





R E P E N T A N C E.

NOTHING in the world makes so great a change as repentance: It changes things in heaven and in earth; for it changes the whole man from sin to grace; from vicious habits to holy customs; from unchaste bodies to angelical souls; from swine to philosophers; from drunkenness to sober counsels: And God himself, "with whom is no variableness, or shadow of change," is pleased, by descending to our weak understandings, to say, that he changes also upon man's repentance; that he alters his decrees; revokes his sentence; cancels the bills of accusation; throws the records of shame and sorrow out of the court of heaven; and lifts up the sinner from the grave to life, from his prison to a throne, from hell and the guilt of eternal torture to heaven, and a title to never-ceasing felicities. If we be bound on earth, we shall be bound in heaven. If we be absolved here upon sincere repentance, we shall be loosed there. In a word, if we repent, God will repent, and not send the evil upon us which we had deserved.

But repentance is a conflagration and society of many duties. It contains in it all the parts of a holy life, from the time of our return to the day of our death inclusively; and it has in it something especially relating to the sins of our former days, which are now to be abolished by special acts, and have obliged us to special labours, brought in many new necessities, and put us into a very great deal of danger. It being a duty
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consisting of so many parts, and such employments; it also requires much time, and leaves a man in the same degree of hope or pardon, as is his restitution to the state of righteousness and holy living, for which we covenanted in our baptism. For we must know, that there is but one repentance in a man's whole life, if repentance be taken in a proper, strict, evangelical, covenant sense, and not after the ordinary understanding of the word; that is, we are but once to change our whole state of life, from the power of the devil and his intire possession, from the state of sin and death, from the body of corruption, to the life of grace, to the possession of Jesus, to the kingdom of the Gospel; and thus is done in the baptism of the water, or in the baptism of the Spirit, when the first rite comes to be verified by God's grace coming upon us, and by our obedience to the heavenly calling, we working together with God. After this change, if ever we fall into the contrary state, and be wholly estranged from God and religion, professing ourselves servants of unrighteousness, God has made no more covenant of restitution with us. There is no place left for any more repentance, or intire change of condition, or new birth: A man can be regenerated but once. Such are voluntary, malicious, apostate, obstinate, impenitent persons, and the like: But if we be overtaken by infirmity, or enter into the borders of this state, and commit a grievous sin, or ten or twenty, so we be not in the intire possession of the devil, we are for the present in a damnable condition if we die; but if we live, we are in a recoverable condition; for so we may repent often. We repent or rise from death but once, but from sickness many times; and by the grace of God we shall be pardoned, if we so repent. Our hope of pardon are just as is our repentance; which if it be timely, hearty, industrious, and sufficient, God accepts, not by weighing grains and scruples, but by estimating the great proportion of our life. A hearty endeavour, and

an effectual general change shall get our pardon; the unavoidable infirmities, past evils, and present imperfections, and short interruptions, against which we watch, and pray, and strive, being put upon the accounts of the cross, and paid for by the holy Jesus.

He who repents truly, is greatly sorrowful for his past sins; not with a superficial sigh or tear, but a pungent afflictive sorrow; such a sorrow as hates the sin so much, that the man would rather choose to die than act it any more: This sorrow is called in scripture, "a weeping sorely; a weeping with all bitterness of heart; a weeping day and night; a sorrow of heart; a breaking of the spirit; mourning like a dove, and chattering like a swallow." And we may read the degree and manner of it in the Lamentations, and sad accents of the prophet Jeremiah, when he wept for the sins of the nation; in the heart-breaking of David when he mourned for his murder and adultery; and the bitter weeping of Saint Peter after the shameful denying of his Master. The expression of the sorrow differs according to the temper of the body, the sex, the age, and circumstances of action, and the motive of sorrow, and by many accidental tenderesses, or masculine hardnesses. The repentance is not to be estimated by the tears, but by the grief. And the grief is not to be valued by the sensitive trouble, but by the cordial hatred of the sin, and ready actual dereliction of it; and a resolution, and real resisting of its consequent temptations. Some people can shed tears for nothing, some for any thing; but the proper and true effects of a godly sorrow are, fear of the divine judgments, apprehension of God's displeasure, watchings and strivings against sin, patiently enduring the cross of sorrow, which God sends as our punishment; and accusation of ourselves in perpetual begging pardon; mean and base opinions of ourselves; and all the natural productions from these, according to our temper and constitution. For if we be apt to weep in other accidents, it is ill if we weep
no!

not also in the sorrow of repentance; not that weeping is of itself a duty, but that the sorrow of it, if it be as great, will be still expressed in as great a manner.

Our sorrow for sins must retain the proportion of our sins, though not the equality. We have no particular measures of our sins. We know not which is greatest, sacrilege, superstition, idolatry, covetousness, the renouncing of our religion, or the betraying our country; and therefore God ties us not to nice measures of sorrow, but only that we keep the general rules of proportion; that is, that a great sin hath a great grief, a smaller crime being to be washed off with a less shower.

Our sorrow for sin is then best accounted of, for its degree, when it, together with all the penal and afflictive duties of repentance, shall have equalled or exceeded the pleasure we had in commission of the sin.

True repentance is a punishing duty, and acts its sorrow, and judges and condemns the sin, by voluntarily submitting to such sadnesses as God sends on us; or strives to prevent the judgment of God, by judging ourselves, and punishing our bodies and our spirits, by such exercises of piety as are troublesome to the body; such as are fasting, watching, long prayers, troublesome postures in our prayers, expensive alms, and all outward acts of humiliation. For he who must judge himself, must condemn himself if he be guilty; and if he be condemned, he must be punished; and if he be so judged, it will help to prevent the judgment of the Lord, as Saint Paul instructs us in this particular. Our grief may be so full of trouble, as to outweigh all the burdens of fasts and bodily afflictions; and then the others are less necessary: When they are used, the benefit of them is to obtain of God a remission, or a lessening of such temporal judgments which God has decreed against the sins; but the sinner is not by any thing of this reconciled to the eternal favour of God: for as yet this is but the introduction to repentance.

Every true penitent is obliged to confess his sins, and to humble himself before God for ever. Confession of sins has a special promise; "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." God has bound himself to forgive us, if we duly confess our sins, and do all that for which confession was appointed: If we are ashamed of them, and own them no more; for confession of our sins to God, can signify nothing of itself in its direct nature: He sees us when we act them, and keeps a record of them, and we forget them unless he reminds us of them by his grace. Therefore to confess them to God, does not punish us, or make us ashamed: But confession, when it proceeds from shame, and sorrow, and is an act of humiliation and self-condemnation, and a laying open our wounds for cure, is then a duty God delights in. In all which circumstances we shall be very much helped if we follow the advice of Saint James, and "confess our sins to one another;" not as the wicked ones do, who boast of their wickedness, and are even so impiously vain as to bely their own selves to shew their superiority in sin; but with all humility, self-abasement, and confusion, to prudent and pious pastors, whose instructions may serve to recover us, and restore us to the right path from whence we wandered. But we must not think that our unbuidening our minds of this load to a minister, will give us any true ease, unless we do it with due contrition and a sincere resolution of new obedience; or that there is any the least efficacy in such an act of itself, except it proceeds from a just sense of our own guilt, and abhorrence of the crime, and an earnest desire of forgiveness from God by his and our own prayers. When our spiritual Guide knows our needs, he can best minister comfort or reproof, oil or causticks: He can more opportunely recommend our particular state to God; he can determine our cases of conscience, and judge better for us than we do for ourselves. The shame of opening such ulcers may restrain our forwardness to contract them;

and all these circumstances of advantage will do very much towards the forgiveness. This course was taken by the new converts in the days of the apostles; "for many that believed came, and confessed and shewed their deeds." And it were well if this duty was practised prudently and innocently in order to publick discipline, or private comfort and instruction.

That it be done to God, is a duty not directly for itself but for its adjuncts, and the duties that go with it, and before it, or after it: Which duties, because they are to be helped and guided by our pastors and curates of souls, he is careful of his eternal interest, who will not lose the advantage of using a private guide and judge; "He that hideth his sins shall not prosper, but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." The condition of mercy is always the forsaking of sins. Absolution without repentance, tho' pronounced by an angel, would be of no more effect, than a blessing upon a sin; but those that repent, the church thro' Christ pronounces absolved. Holy persons in ancient times were wont to carry table-books about them, and wrote in them an account of all their determinate thoughts, purposes, words and actions, in which they had suffered infirmity; that by communicating the state of their souls, they might be instructed, and guided, and corrected, or encouraged.

True repentance must reduce to act all its holy purposes, and enter into, and run thro' the state of holy living, which is contrary to that state of darkness, in which in times past we walked. For to resolve to do it, and yet not to do it, is to break our resolution and our faith, to mock God, to falsify and evacuate all the preceding acts of repentance, and to make our pardon hopeless, and our hope fruitless. He who resolves to live well when a danger or violent fear is upon him; or when the appetites of lust are newly satisfied, or newly served, and yet when the temptation comes again, sins again, and then is sorrowful, and resolves once more

against it, and yet falls when the temptation returns; is a vain man, but no true penitent, not in the state of grace. And if he chance to die in one of those good moods, he is very far from salvation; for if it be necessary that we resolve to live well, it is necessary we should do so: Resolution being an imperfect act, a term of relation, and signifies nothing but in order to the actions. It is as a faculty is to the act; it is the spring of the harvest, as eggs are to birds, and a relative to its correspondent; nothing without it. No man therefore can be in the state of grace, and actual favour, by resolutions and holy purposes; these are but the gate and portal towards pardon. A holy life is the only perfection of repentance, and the firm ground upon which we can cast the anchor of our hope in the mercies of God through Jesus Christ.

No man is to reckon his pardon immediately upon his return from sin to the beginning of a good life, but is to begin his hopes and degrees of confidence according as sin dies in him, and grace lives, as the habit of sin lessens, and righteousness grows; according as sin returns but seldom, in smaller instances, and without choice, by surprise, without deliberation, is highly dis-relished, and presently dashed against the Rock Christ Jesus by a holy sorrow, and renewed care of more strict watchfulness: For a holy life being the condition of the covenant on our part, as we return to God, so God returns to us, and our state returns to the probability of pardon.

Every man is to work out his salvation with fear and trembling: and after the commission of sins, his fears must multiply; because every new sin, and every great declining from the ways of God, is still a degree of new danger, and has increased God's anger, and has made him more uneasy to grant pardon. When he does grant it, it is upon harder terms both for doing and suffering. We must do more for pardon, and it may be suffer much more. For we must know that God

pardons our sins by parts; as our duty increases, and our care is more prudent and active, so God's anger decreases; and yet it may be the last sin you committed made God unalterably resolved to send upon you some sad judgment. We are uncertain of the particulars in all cases, and therefore we have reason always to mourn for our sins, that have so provoked God, and made our condition so full of danger, that it may be no prayers, or tears, or duty, can alter his sentence concerning some sad judgment upon us. Thus God irrevocably decreed to punish the Israelites for idolatry, tho' Moses prayed for them; and God forgave them in some degree, so far as that he would not cut them off from being a people: Yet he would not forgive them so, but he would visit their sin upon them, and he did so.

A true penitent must all the days of his life pray for pardon, and never think the work compleated till he dies; not by any act of his own, by no act of the church, by no forgiveness by the party injured, by no restitution. These are all instruments of great use and efficacy, and the means by which it is to be done at length; but still the sin lies at the door ready to return upon us in judgment and damnation, if we return to it in choice or action. And whether God has forgiven us or no, we know not, nor how far he has forgiven us: All that we have done is not of sufficient worth to obtain pardon. Wherefore, let all penitents pray still, and still be sorrowful for what they have done amiss, and for ever watch against it. Those beginnings of pardon which are working all the way, will then at last be perfected in the day of the Lord.

Defer not at all to repent; much less may you put it off to a death-bed; it is not an easy thing to root out the habits of sin, which a man's whole life has gathered and confirmed, we find work enough to mortify one beloved lust in our very best advantage of strength and time, and before it is so deeply rooted, as it must needs be supposed to be at the end of a wicked life: And

therefore it will prove impossible, when the work is so great, and the strength so little; when sin is so strong, and grace so weak; for they always keep the same proportion of increase and decrease; and as sin grows, grace decays. The more need we have of grace, the less at that time we shall have of it; because the greatness of our sins, which makes the need, has lessened the grace of God, which should help us. To which add this consideration, that on a man's death-bed the day of repentance is past. For repentance being the renewing of a holy life, a living the life of grace, it is a contradiction to say, a man can live a holy life upon his death-bed; especially if we consider, that for a sinner to live a holy life, we must first suppose him to have overcome all his evil habits, and then to have made a purchase of the contrary graces by the labours of great prudence, watchfulness, self-denial, and severity; "Nothing that is excellent can be wrought suddenly."

After the beginnings of a sinner's recovery, let him be infinitely fearful of a relapse. And therefore upon the stock of his sad experience, where his failings were, and by special acts, let him fortify that faculty and arm against temptation. For if all those arguments which God uses to preserve our innocence, and the sinner's late danger, and his fears, and the goodness of God make him once escape; and the shame of his fall, and the sense of his own weaknesses will not make him watchful against a fall; especially knowing how much it costs a man to be restored; it will be infinitely more dangerous if ever he falls again, not only lest God should no more accept him to pardon, but even his own hopes will be made more desperate, and his impatience greater, and his shame turn to impudence, and his "latter end will be worse than his beginning." Further, Let him consider that his sin, which was formerly in a good way of being pardoned, will not only return upon him with all its own loads, but with the baseness of unthankfulness; and he will be set as far back from heaven as ever.

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All his former labours and fears, and watchings and agonies will be reckoned for nothing, but as arguments to upbraid his folly, who, when he had set one foot in heaven, did pull that back, and carry both to hell.

One would think there needed no other arguments to move a sinner to repentance, than to tell him, unless he repents he shall certainly perish; and if he does repent timely and intirely by living a holy life, he shall be forgiven, and be saved. But this consideration must be enlarged with some great circumstances; and we are to remember, that to admit mankind to repentance, and pardon, was a favour greater than ever God gave to the angels, and to the devils; for they had not the permission to come to second thoughts. Christ never granted one groan for them; he never suffered one stripe, nor one affront, nor shed one drop of blood to restore them to hopes of blessedness after their first failings. But this he did for us; he paid the score of our sins only, that we might be admitted to repent, and that this repentance might be effectual to the great purposes of felicity and salvation.

Consider, that as it cost Christ many millions of prayers, and groans, and sighs; so he is now, at this instant, and has been 1700 years, night and day, incessantly praying for grace for us, that we may repent; and for pardon, when we do; and for degrees of pardon, beyond the capacities of our infirmities, and the merit of our sorrows and amendment. This prayer will be continued by him till his second coming, "for he ever liveth to make intercession for us." And that we may know what it is, in behalf of which he intercedes, St. Paul tells us his design; "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though he did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." And what Christ prays us to do, he prays to God that we may do; that which he desires of us as his servants, he desires of God, who is the fountain of grace and power unto us, and without whose assistance we can do nothing.

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That ever we should repent, was so costly a purchase, so great a concernment, so high a favour; and the event is esteemed by God himself so great an excellency, that our blessed Saviour tells us, "There shall be joy in heaven over ~~one~~ ^{one} sinner that repenteth;" meaning, that ~~when~~ ^{when} Christ shall be glorified, and at the right hand of the father, making intercession for us, praying for our repentance; the conversion and repentance of every sinner is part of Christ's glorification; it is the answering of his prayers; it is a portion of his reward, in which he does essentially glory by the joys of his glorified humanity. This is the joy of our Lord himself directly, not of the angels, except only by reflexion. The joy, said our blessed Redeemer, shall be in the presence of the angels; they shall see the glory of the Lord, the answering of his prayers, the satisfaction of his desires, and the reward of his sufferings, in the repentance and consequent pardon of a sinner. For this reason he once suffered, and for that reason he rejoices for ever. Wherefore, when a penitent sinner comes to receive the effect and full consummation of his pardon, it is called "an entering into ^{the} joy of our Lord;" a partaking of that joy which Christ received at our conversion, and enjoyed ever since.

Add to this. That the rewards of heaven are so great and glorious, and Christ's burden is so light, his yoke so easy, that it is a shameless impudence to expect so great glories at a less rate than so little a service, at a lower rate than a holy life. It cost the heart-blood of the Son of God to obtain heaven for us upon that condition: And who shall die again to get heaven for us upon easier terms? What would you do if God should command you to kill your eldest son, or to work in the mines for a thousand years together, or to fast all your life-time with bread and water? Were not heaven a very great bargain even after all this? And when God requires nothing of us, but to live soberly, justly, and godly; which things of themselves are to a man a very great felicity, and necessary to our present well-being:

being: Shall we think this to be an intolerable burden, and that heaven is too little a purchase at that price? That God in mere justice will take a death-bed sigh, or a groan, and a few unprofitable tears and promises, in exchange for all our duty?

If these considerations, joined together with our own interest, even as much as the felicity and the sight of God, and the avoiding the intolerable pains of hell, and many intermediate judgments to come, will not move us to leave the filthiness, the trouble, the uneasiness, and the unreasonableness of sin, and turn to God; there is no more to be said, we must perish in our folly.

This sure is sufficient to warn all Christians against deferring their repentance to the hour of death. They will from hence perceive, that to send for a minister when the doctor has done with them, or even when sickness has rendered them impotent to sin, can be no more help to their salvation, than to that of the damned. And how comfortably do some deluded wretches slide into perdition, depending on the efficacy of a few apt prayers by the minister, a too late receiving of the Lord's Supper? Do they think that God will take their service, when the devil can have no more of it; and that the repentance of their last moments, shall atone for the sins of their whole lives? How dreadful will their disappointment be, who die in this sad dream! and in what a world of misery will they awake!





T H E S A C R A M E N T.

I T has been often observed, that the design of this work was suited with a particular view to serve the Ladies, to whom it is particularly addressed: But the generality of authors having spoken to the men, that sex is often named in imitation of them; but the women always understood too; there being but few or no virtues or vices which do not alike concern both of them.

There remains another duty to be treated of, to which many of the female sex seem to need some incitation; and that is, Communicating; a part of devotion the looser sort scarce ever think in season till their death-beds. As if that sacrament, like the extreme unction of the Papists, was only fit for expiring souls. But to such we may apply the words of the angel to the woman, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Why think ye that the Sun of Righteousness is only to shine in the shades of death? or that Christ is never to give us his flesh, till we are putting off our own? One of the principal ends of that sacrament is, to engage and enable us to a new life: How preposterous then is it, how utterly inconsistent with that end, to defer it to the hour of death? It is true, it is a good viaticum for such as are in their way towards bliss; but it is too bold a hope to fancy it shall in an instant bring them into that

that way, who have their whole life posted on in a contrary. The roads to heaven and hell lie sure too far asunder to be within one step's distance: Nor can it with any safety be presumed, that once receiving at their death, shall expiate so many wilful neglects of it in their life.

It is to be hoped these total omissions are not a common guilt; yet, with many others, the fault differs only in degree; they do not wholly omit, but yet come so seldom, as if they thought it a very arbitrary matter whether they come or no. And this truly is observable in many, who seem to give good attendance on other parts of divine worship: It is a sad spectacle to see, that, let a church be never so much crowded at sermon, it is empty in an instant when the communion begins. People run as it were frightened from it, as if they thought with those in Malachi, that the "table of our Lord is polluted:" That some pest or infection would thence break forth upon them. A strange indignity to the majesty, and ingratitude to the love of our Redeemer! Let a King, or but some great man, make a publick entertainment, how hard is it to keep back the pressing multitude? Many officers are necessary to repel the uninvited guests; and yet here there needs more to drive us to it, tho' the invitation be more general, and the treat infinitely more magnificent.

I know this fault, like many others, shrouds itself under a fair disguise; and this barbarous neglect pretends to the humblest veneration. People say it is the great reverence they have for the sacrament, which keeps them at so great a distance. That certainly is a fictitious reverence which discards obedience. And when Christ commands our coming, our drawing back looks more like stubbornness and rebellion, than awe and respect. I suppose we pretend not to exceed the primitive Christians in humility and godly fear; and yet they communicated daily. Our reverence therefore is of a much different
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make from theirs, if it produces such contrary effects. Indeed it is to be feared, that many put a great cheat upon themselves in this matter. The Eucharist is justly accounted the highest of divine ordinances; and those who think of no preparation in others, yet have some general impressions of the necessity of it in this; but the uneasiness of the task discourages them; they dare not come without a wedding-garment, and yet are loth to be at the pains to put it on. Thus all this goodly pretext of reverence, is but the devil in Samuel's mantle, is but sloth clad in the habit of humility.

And to this temptation of sloth, there is another thing very subservient, which is the easy and slight opinion that is commonly taken of sins of omission. Many are startled at great commissions, think them to carry a face of deformity and horror, who in the mean time look on omissions as privations, and mere nothing. As if all the affirmative precepts were only things of form put in by God, rather to try our inclinations than to oblige our performance; and so were rather overtures and proposals, which we may assent to or not, than injunctions, which at our peril we must obey. A fancy no less absurd than impious, that God should be content so to compound with his creatures, and, like a prince overpowered by his vassals, consent to remit all their homage, absolve them from all positive duty, so they would be but so civil as not to fly in his face, or commit outrage on his person: Which wild imagination needs no other confutation than that form of indictment our Saviour gives us as the model of that which will be used at the last day, in St. Matthew's gospel, where the whole process lies against sins of omission; and yet the sentence is as dismal and irreversible, as if all the commissions in the world had been put into the bill.

And certainly of all omissions, none is like to be more severely charged than this of communicating; which is not only a disobedience, but an unkindness, striking at the
authority,

authority, as well as the love of our Lord, when he so affects a union with us, that he creates mysteries only to effect it; when he descends even to our sensuality; and because we want spiritual appetites, puts himself within reach of our natural. As he once veiled his divinity in flesh, so he now veils even that flesh under the form of our corporal nourishment; only that he may the more indissolubly unite, nay, incorporate himself with us. When, I say, he does all this, we are not only impious, but inhuman, if it will not attract us; especially when he does all this upon the most endearing memory of what he has before done for us; when he presents himself to our embraces in the same form wherein he presented himself to God for our expiation; when he shews us those wounds which our iniquities made, those stripes by which we were healed, that death by which we are revived. Shall we, to complete the scene of his passion, force him to that pathetic complaint, "Have ye no regard, all ye that pass by!" Shall we, instead of smiting our breast, as did other witnesses of his sufferings, turn our backs! If we can habitually do this, it is to be feared, the next degree will be to wag our heads too; and we shall have the profaneness to deride, what we have not the piety to commemorate.

This seems to be no improbable fear; for in religion there are gradual declinations, as well as advances. Coldness and tepidity, if not stopt in the progress, quickly grow to loathing and contempt. And indeed, to what can we more reasonably impute the great overflowings of profaneness among us, than to our ill husbanding the means of grace, to the disuse and even abuse of the holy sacrament, which of all the means of grace has the greatest energy and power?

Were there no other benefit derived from it, except that which the preparation implies, it were very considerable. It brings us to a recollection; fixes our indefinite purposes of searching and trying our ways, which
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else perhaps we should infinitely defer; stops our career in sin, and by acquainting us with ourselves, shows us where our danger lies, and how we are to avert it; what breaches are made upon our souls, and how we must repair them; all which are, with many, seldom thought of, but when the time of communicating approaches. We live so far from ourselves, know so little what is done in us, that we answer the description the prophet makes of the surprise of Babylon, of which the king knew nothing, till post after post ran to inform him, that "his city was taken at one end." We often lie secure while the enemy is within our walls, and therefore they are friendly alarms which the sacrament gives us to look to our defence. But if when the trumpet sounds, none will prepare himself to the battle; if when the minister gives warning of a sacrament, and the preparation it requires, we go our ways, and with Gallio "care for none of those things," or with Felix "put it off to a convenient time," we wilfully expose ourselves; and it is but just Christ's dreadful menace should be executed upon us, that we "die in our sins," who will frustrate such an opportunity of a rescue from them.

But it is not only this remoter and accidental advantage, this preventing grace, which the holy eucharist affords: It contains yet greater and more intrinsic benefits, it is a spring of resisting grace also, a magazine of spiritual artillery to fortify us against all the assaults of the devil, the great catholicon for all the maladies of the soul; that which if duly received will qualify us to make St. Paul's boast, "I can do all things thro' Christ which strengthens me." In a word, it is to us whatever we need, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, because it possesses us of him who is so; wherefore, whenever we neglect it, we manifestly betray our own interest, and implicitly choose death, while we thus run from life.

Thus we see, there is a concurrence of all sorts of arguments for this duty. Oh that some at least of them
may

may prevail! If we are not tractable enough to do it in obedience, yet let us be so ingenuous as to do it for love, for gratitude; or if for neither of these, let us be at least so wise as to do it for interest and advantage. People are apt to pretend business. The farms and the oxen must excuse their coming to the feast. But alas! What business can there be of equal necessity with this? Yet even that apology is superseded to the sex I more particularly speak to. It would therefore be one part of the benefit, its taking up some of their time. Let me then earnestly beseech them, not to grudge a few of their vacant hours to this so happy an employment.

Did any of their near friends and relations invite them to an interview, they would not think him too importunate, tho' he repeated the summons weekly, nay daily, but would punctually observe the meeting. And when their Saviour much seldomer intreats their company, shall he not obtain it? Must he never see them but at two or three solemn times of the year? And shall they wonder at any intervening invitation, as the Shunamite's husband did at her going to the prophet, when it was neither new moon nor sabbath, and tell him, it is not Easter or Christmas? This were not only to be irreligious but rude. And methinks those who stand so much upon punctilios of civility to one another, should not then only lay aside their good manners when they are to treat with their Redeemer. Certainly he is not so unpleasant company that they need shun his converse: If he appears to to any, it is that shunning which is the cause of it; he does not open his treasures to strangers: They who come now and then for form sake, no wonder if their entertainment be as cold as their address. They that would indeed "taste how sweet the Lord is," must by the frequency of their coming shew the heartiness of it, and then they would indeed find it a "feast of fat things," as the prophet speaks.

In a word, let them but make experiment, resolve, for a certain time, be it a year or thereabouts, to omit

no opportunity, and withal no due preparation of communicating: I am a little confident they will afterwards need no other importunity but that of their own longings. The expiration of that definite time will prove the beginning of an indefinite; and their resolutions will have no other limits but their lives. For in all the whole mystery of godliness, in all the oeconomy of the gospel, there is not so expedite, so infallible a means of growth in grace, as a frequent and worthy participation of this blessed sacrament, by which we not only complete all our devotions, crown and hallow the rest of our oblations to God, but we shall be advanced in all the practical parts of piety.

For tho' this and other sacred offices be performed in the church, the efficacy of them is not circumscribed within those walls, but follows the devout soul through all the occurrences of human life.

She who has intently considered the presence of God in the sanctuary, has learned so much of his ubiquity, that she will not easily forget it in other places; and she who remembers that, will need no other guard to secure her innocence; no other incentive to animate her endeavours; since she is viewed by him who is equally powerful to punish and reward; who regards not the person of the mighty, nor can be awed into connivance by a prince. Indeed, a serious reflecting on the divine presence, is the most certain curb to all disorderly appetites; as on the contrary, the "not having God before their eyes," is in scripture the comprehensive description of the most wretched, profligate state of sin.

It concerns therefore all those who aspire to true piety, to nourish that awful sense in their hearts, as that which will best enable them to practise the apostle's advice, "To cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."

There is nothing in our religion so solemn as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; to the frequent receiving of which, we are bound as Christians, and we cannot neglect

neglect it without a great contempt of our blessed Saviour and his religion : He has appointed it for a solemn remembrance of his great love to us, in laying down his life for us ; and therefore he commands us to do it in remembrance of him : And St. Paul tells us, “ That as often as we eat his bread, and drink this cup, we do shew forth the Lord’s death till he come.”

Great are both the comfort and benefit of it. The comfort of it, because it does not only represent to us the exceeding love of our Saviour, in giving his body to be broken, and his blood to be shed for us ; but it also seals to us all those blessings and benefits which are purchased and procured for us by his death and passion, the pardon of sins, and power against sin.

The benefit of it is also great, because hereby we are confirmed in goodness. Our resolutions of better obedience are strengthened, and the grace of God’s holy spirit to enable us to do his will, is hereby conveyed to us. The best preparation for it is, a sincere repentance for all our sins and miscarriages, which we remember ourselves to be at any time guilty of ; daily prayer to God, that he would give us sincere repentance for all our sins, and mercifully forgive them to us ; and a serious and firm resolution to forsake them, and to do better for the future ; to be more careful in all our actions, and more constant in prayer to God for his grace, to enable us to keep his commandments ; a being in charity with all men, and forgiving those who have injured us by word or deed, as we hope for forgiveness from God.

Let none of us say that we are not fitted and prepared for it ; it is our duty to be so ; and if we be not prepared to receive the sacrament, we are not qualified for the mercy of God, and for his forgiveness ; we are not prepared for the happiness of heaven, and can have no hopes to come thither. But if we prepare ourselves as well as we can by repentance, and resolutions of being better, and by praying heartily and earnestly to God for his

his grace, he will accept of this preparation, and will give us the comfort of this holy sacrament; the neglect of which is one of the most effectual causes of the decay of christian piety among us. Were it but frequented with that wise and due preparation that it ought to be, it would doubtless be highly instrumental to reform the world, and to make men good in good earnest. For besides that these sacred elements are by God's institution become moral consequences of the divine grace, by which our good resolutions are nourished and confirmed; we have there represented openly to our senses one of the greatest arguments against sin in all our religion, the passion and sacrifice of our blessed Saviour: He is there represented to our eyes in all his wounds and agonies, bruised and broken for our sin, and bleeding to expiate our transgressions: How can every Christian help crying out in the omission of this duty,

“ Oh my obdurate heart! Canst thou behold this tragical spectacle without indignation against thy sins, which were the cause of it? Does not thy heart rise against thy sins, whilst thou here beholdest him weltering in his blood, and hearest those gaping wounds it issues from, proclaiming them his assassins and murderers! But if thou hast not ingenuity enough to prompt thee to revenge thy Saviour's quarrel upon these his mortal enemies, yet methinks self-love would move thee not to be fond of thy sins, when thou here beholdest how much the Son of God endured to expiate them: For how canst thou think of sinning, without trembling and astonishment, who hast before thy eyes such a dreadful example of God's severity against it? Does it not strike thy soul into an agony, to behold this bloody tragedy? in which the all-merciful Father is represented so inexorably incensed against thy sins, that he who was the most innocent person that ever was upon earth, and the greatest favourite that ever was in heaven, could not with all his prayers and tears obtain thy pardon, without undergoing for thee the bitter agonies of a woeful death? Sure, if thou hast any one
“ spark

“ spark of love in thee towards thy Saviour, or thyself,
 “ this solemn commemoration of his passion cannot but
 “ affect thee with horror and indignation against thy sins.”

As in this great solemnity we commemorate our Saviour's passion, so we also renew the vows of our obedience to him ; which is very influential in itself to the subduing of our sins, but much more when it is done in so sacred a manner. For as feasting upon sacrifices was always used as a federal rite, both among the Jews and Heathens, whereby God and man, by eating together, did mutually oblige themselves to one another : So the Lord's Supper being a feast upon the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood ; when we come thither, we eat and drink of his sacrifice, and thereby devote ourselves in the most solemn manner to his service. We swear allegiance to him upon his own body and blood, and take the sacrament upon it, that we will be his faithful votaries. When we take the consecrated symbols into our hands, we make this solemn dedication of ourselves to God.

“ Here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee ; and here we call to witness this sacred blood that redeemed us, and these vocal wounds that interceded for us, that from henceforth we oblige ourselves never to start from thy service, what difficulty soever we may encounter in it, and what temptation soever we may have to forsake it.”

Now what can be a greater restraint to us, when we are solicited to any evil, than such a solemn and sacred obligation ? Methinks the sense of that dreadful vow that is upon us should so overawe us, that we should not be able to think of sinning without horror.

“ For, Lord, how shall I dare to cheat and defraud my neighbour, when it was but the other day that I vowed to be honest, and took the sacrament upon it ? With what conscience can I now hate, or design re-

“venge against my brother, whom I lately swore unto
 “God, upon the body and blood of our Saviour, that I
 “love and forgive all the world?”

Surely, if men had any sense of God and religion in them, they would not be able, after such engagements, to look upon any temptation to sin without trembling; and whatever pretences of unworthiness men may make, to keep themselves from this ordinance, I doubt not but the great reason of their neglect is this; that they love their lusts, and are resolved, whatever comes of it, they will not part with them: They will not come to the sacrament, because they must resolve to renounce them; which they are extremely unwilling to do. And if this be their reason, as it is to be feared it is, they are unworthy indeed, the more shame for them; but it is such an unworthiness, as is so far from excusing their neglect, that it is a foul aggravation of it. For he who will not receive the sacrament, because he will not renounce his lusts, makes one sin the reason of another, and so pleads that for his excuse, which will be the cause of his condemnation. But if we are honestly resolved to part with all our sins, and can but willingly devote them as sacrifices to the altar, we are sufficiently prepared for this great solemnity, and shall be welcome guests to the table of our Lord. If we can sincerely pay our vows at his altar, we may confidently “take the cup of salvation, and call upon the
 “Name of the Lord.” And having thus chained up our lusts by the vows of obedience we have paid there, it will be hard for them to shake off such mighty fetters, or ever to get loose again from so strict a confinement; especially if we take care to repeat this our sacramental vow as often as conveniently we can: For the frequent renewal of our holy vows doth mightily tend to strengthen and reinforce them: and therefore it is worth observing, how much care Christ has taken in the very constitution of his religion, to oblige us to a constant repeti-

repetition of our vows and good purposes : For at our first entrance into covenant with him, we are to be baptized ; in which solemnity we renounce the devil and all his work , and religiously devote ourselves to his service. But because we are apt to forget our vow, and the matter of it is continually to be performed, and more than one would depends upon it, therefore he has thought fit not to trust to our first engagement, but so to methodize our religion, that we should often be obliged to give him new security : For which end he has instituted this other sacrament ; which is not, like that of baptism, to be received by us once for all, but is to be frequently repeated, that so, at every return of it, we might be obliged again to renew our old vows of obedience. And, doubtless, would we but follow this good design of our Saviour, we should be far more successful in our religion than we are : For till we come to a continued state of goodness, our holy fervour will be very apt to cool, our good purposes to slacken and unwind, and our virtuous endeavours to languish and grow weary ; wherefore, unless we revive our religion by frequent restoratives, in a little time it will faint and die away. To keep it alive, it is very necessary to come to our great Master's table every time we are invited, that here we may renew our vows, and reinvigorate our resolutions, and repair our decays, and put our sluggish graces into a new fermentation. And if we would thus often communicate with a due preparation of mind, we should doubtless at every sacrament acquire new life and vigour, and our good resolutions would every day get ground of our bad inclinations, till at last they had totally subdued them.

Let us further consider the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as a part of divine worship, an instrument of holiness, and a remedy against temptation ; and the incomparable office of our church has admirably expressed and reduced to a method the whole mind of the Gospel relating to this matter. For which we have

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cause to bless God, in beholding and reverencing that primitive plainness, and truly Christian spirit visible in it.

Our Lord's Supper, considered as an act or part of religious worship, contains an humble acknowledgment of our sins, a devout profession of our faith in Christ, that we are disciples of our crucified Saviour, and expect salvation no other way than by that sacrifice of his body and blood offered upon the cross; and also contains a solemn oblation of most humble and hearty thanks to God for his inestimable benefit, by bestowing his Son upon us to die for us; and to our Master and only Saviour Christ, for his exceeding great love in dying for us. It is further, a most solemn oblation of ourselves, souls, and bodies, to be a holy, lively, and acceptable sacrifice to God. Thus this sacrament consists of a whole constellation of graces, repentance, faith, hope, charity: It is a nearer approach to the presence of God, and more solemn exercise of the graces of the Gospel, which gives a very fair account of the reason of its frequent practice. For nothing can be a more effectual instrument of holiness, were it only on account of the preparation necessary as a condition of our worthy reception, which awakens our souls, and refreshes all our graces; mortifies all our sensual lusts, and draws us nearer to heaven. The necessity of this preparation, as the church office prescribes, appears from hence; that repentance, faith, and charity, are absolutely necessary to enable a man to exert those effects before mentioned, which constitute this Sacrament, considered as a part of divine worship; and therefore to approach that holy table without a soul so qualified, is to affront and mock the Majesty of heaven.

The exercise of our graces in receiving, increases and improves them: That act of humble adoration, and profound prostration of ourselves before God, under a sense of his bounty and majesty, and our sinfulness
and

and meanness; that lively act of faith by which our souls profess a belief of, and dependence upon, the death and passion of our dear Lord and Saviour, for salvation; that love whereby the soul offers its praises, and its self a sacrifice to God, leave such lively and lasting impressions upon mens minds, as are not quickly nor easily effaced; and the soul, by the delight it finds in exerting these graces, is enkindled with a desire of repeating the same acts.

The sacrament itself has a natural tendency to promote holiness, by its sensible representations of a crucified Saviour. The symbols themselves being fit to bring into our minds the pains and sufferings of our dear Lord and Master, by that inward grace inseparable from the worthy reception of it, bestowed upon us to refresh and strengthen our souls, to root and confirm our faith, to inflame our love, and perfect our hopes; by being a pledge and assurance to us of the pardon of our sins, through the blood of Christ. It is a new and repeated engagement of ourselves to the service of Christ, to an obedience to his laws, and a renunciation of those enemies of Christians, the world, the flesh, and the devil. From all which it is easy to infer, that it is a strong fence and antidote against temptations: For these fresh impressions of our Saviour's love, the new strengths of divine grace, the vigour of a new and solemn engagement to obedience, fill the soul with a holy zeal against sin, and a glorious contempt of sensual pleasures.

“ And now, O my God! what should make me so prodigally venturous of my own safety, as to neglect the frequent use of this holy sacrament? Have I not needed frequently to examine myself? Are not thy graces apt to wither and decay, unless thus watered and refreshed? Does not my converse with the world, and my communication with flesh and blood, render it necessary for me to renew my resolutions against them as often as I can? Or is there not a holy delight in the exercise of all this, that surpasses all the pleasures of a
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“ sensual life? Is it not a sacrifice that my Lord and Saviour is highly pleased with? Is it not reasonable, that I should oblige him who died for me, with this frequent acknowledgment of his infinite love, evidenced in his death? Pardon me, O my God, that “ have been so ungrateful to thee,” to be senseless of my own welfare and advantage. For the time to come “ I will delight in this holy communion: I will often offer up myself a sacrifice to thee, and profess my faith “ in a crucified Saviour, and thence beg thy assistance “ and conduct through the difficult paths of this present life. And, O my God! accept then of my addresses and praises, through the infinite mercies and “ blood of Christ.”

Before we close our considerations on this divine subject, we must inquire into the rise and origin of this mystery, and explain the reason of its being established as a principal ordinance of Christianity.

Among the wonderful works of power and grace, performed by God Almighty in favour of the children of Israel, and in order to their deliverance from the Egyptian slavery, a most signal one was the destroying the first-born of the Egyptians, and passing over the houses of the children of Israel. In which God declared his just wrath against their cruel oppressors, depriving them in a sudden and dreadful manner of what was nearest and dearest to them; and his gracious mercy towards the Israelites, in preserving what was alike dear to them from so woful a calamity. Now that the memory of so remarkable a mercy might be preserved, that their affections might be raised to a strong sense of God’s goodness, and their faith in him confirmed, so as in the like need to hope for the same favourable help and protection, by the consideration of so notable an experiment, it pleased God to appoint a sacrament, or mysterious rite, to be annually celebrated, representing and recalling to mind that act of God in which his special kindness was so eminently demonstrated towards his people; looking forward, however, upon that other
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great delivery from sin and hell, which God in mercy discovered to mankind was to be attained by our Saviour; prefiguring, that the souls of those that should be willing to forsake the spiritual bondage of sin, should be saved from the ruin coming upon them who would abide therein: God regarding the blood of our Saviour, that immaculate Lamb sacrificed for them, sprinkled upon the doors of their houses, that is, by hearty faith and repentance applied to their consciences. The occasion of celebrating which holy rite, our Saviour, we see, did improve to the institution of this sacrament; most agreeing with it in design, as representative and commemorative of the greatest blessing and mercy we are capable of having vouchsafed to us. Some part of that ancient rite or sacrifice, which was most suitable to the special purposes of this institution, and most conformable to the general constitution of the Christian religion, by which all bloody sacrifices are abolished, being retained in this.

The action itself, or rather the whole rite, consisting of several actions, is plainly described in the Gospels, distinguishable into these chief parts; the benediction and consecration (by prayer and thanksgiving) of bread and wine; the breaking of bread, and handling the cup; the delivery and distribution of them to the persons present, the declaration accompanying that delivery; that those symbolical things and actions do represent our Saviour's body given and broken, our Saviour's blood shed and poured out for us, in sanction of the new covenant; the actual partaking of these symbols, by eating the bread, and drinking the wine, done by all present. These things we find done at the first institution, and exemplary practice of this holy ceremony, which our Saviour obliged us to imitate, say-
 "Do this in remembrance of me." There follows in Saint Matthew and Saint Mark, presently after the narration concerning these particulars, "And having sung a hymn they went to the mount of Olives;" which action

was indeed in itself proper to conclude the practice of this holy rite; yet what reference it has towards it cannot thence be determined: However, with these the church has always joined several acts of devotion, confession, prayers, praises, thanksgivings, intercessions, vows, suitable to the nature and design of the sacrament, to glorify God, and edify the faithful, in the celebration of it.

Such is the practice itself instituted and enjoined by our Saviour; the mysterious importance of it, as we find it explained in holy Scripture, that only solid and sure ground upon which we can build the explication of supernatural mysteries, consists chiefly in these particulars.

It was intended as a commemorative representation of our Saviour's passion for us; fit to mind us of it, to move us to consider it, to beget affection in us suitable to the memory and consideration of it: "To tell forth the death of our Lord till he come," or during his absence. The suffering of our Saviour, the most wonderful act of goodness and charity that ever was performed in the world; which produced effects of highest consequence to our benefit, should very frequently be present to our thoughts and affections; and that it may be so with advantage, such a solemn and sensible representation of it is very conducive, in which we behold him crucified as it were in effigy, his body broken, his blood poured out for us, it being in a sort a putting us into the circumstances of those who beheld our Saviour for us hanging upon the cross. Our Lord being absent in body from us, sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven; to supply that absence, and that we should not be apt to forget him, and thereby become wholly estranged from him, is pleased to order this occasion of being present, and conversing with us, in such a manner as may retain in our memories his gracious performances for us, may impress in our hearts a kindly sense of them, may raise us up in affection and mind to him.

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The benefits consequent upon our Saviour's passion, rightly apprehended, heartily believed, seriously considered by us, are hereby lively represented, and effectually conveyed to the sustenance and nourishment of our spiritual life, and the refreshment and comfort of our souls. It is a holy feast, a spiritual repast, a divine entertainment, to which God in kindness invites us, to which if we come with well-disposed minds, he there feeds us with most holy and delicious viands, with heavenly manna, with most reviving and cherishing liquor. "Bread is the staff of life," the most common, most necessary, most wholesome, and most savoury meat. Wine is the most pleasant, most wholesome, most sprightly and cordial drink. By them therefore our Lord chose to represent that body and blood, by the oblation of which a capacity of life and health was procured to mankind; the taking in which by right apprehension, tasting it by hearty faith, digesting it by careful attention and meditation, converting it to our substance by devout, grateful and holy affections, joined with serious and steady resolutions of living answerable thereto, will certainly support and maintain our spiritual life, in a vigorous health, and happy growth of grace, refreshing our hearts with unspeakable comfort and satisfaction. He "that doeth thus, eats our Saviour's flesh, and "drinks his blood;" that is, he who, as our Saviour interprets it, "doth believe in him;" that belief importing all other acts of mind and will connected, with right persuasions concerning him, "hath eternal life, "and shall live for ever," as himself declares and promises; which benefits therefore are conveyed to us in the due performance of this holy duty.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper declares that union, which good Christians partaking of it have with Christ; their mystical insertion into him by a close dependence upon him for spiritual life, mercy, grace, and salvation; a constant adherence to him by faith and obedience; a near conformity to him in

mind and affection; an inseparable conjunction with him by the strictest bonds of fidelity, and by the most endearing relations; which things could not more fitly be set out, than by participating of our best and most necessary food, which being taken in, soon becomes united to us, assimilated and converted into our substance, thereby renewing our strength, and repairing the decays of Nature: Wherefore, "He," says our Saviour, "that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him." And, says Saint Paul, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" We in the outward action partake of the symbols representing our Saviour's body and blood: We in the spiritual intentions communicate of his very person, being, according to the manner insinuated, intimately united to him.

By this sacrament consequently is signified and sealed that union which is among our Saviour's true disciples communicating therein; and their being together united in consent of mind, and unity of faith, in mutual goodwill and affection, in hope and tendency to the same blessed end; in spiritual brotherhood and society, especially upon account of their communion with Christ, which most closely ties them to one another. They partaking of this individual food, become translated as it were with one body and substance: "Seeing," says Saint Paul, "we being many, are one bread, and one body; for all of us do partake of one bread."

In the representing, producing, and promoting these things, we are taught that the mystery of this sacrament consisteth. It was designed as a proper and efficacious instrument to raise in us pious affections towards our God and gracious Redeemer; to dispose us to all holy practice; to confirm our faith; to nourish our hope; to quicken our resolutions of walking carefully in the ways of duty; to unite us more firmly to our Saviour, and to combine us in charity one towards another. The

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accomplishing of which intends of it, supposes our faithful and diligent concurrence in the use of it; whence arise many duties incumbent upon us in respect to it, some antecedent, some concomitant, and some consequent to this duty.

Before we address ourselves to the partaking of this venerable mystery, we should consider whither we are going, what is the nature and importance of the action we sit ourselves about when we are approaching to our Lord's Table: to the apostle calls it: 'To come into his more especial presence, to be entertained by him with the dearest welcome, and the best cheer that can be; to receive the fullest testimonies of his mercy, and the surest pledges of his favour towards us; that we are going to behold our Lord in tenderest love, offering up himself a sacrifice to God therein, undergoing the sorest pains and foulest disgraces for our good and salvation; that we ought therefore to bring with us dispositions of soul suitable to such an access, to such an intercourse with our gracious Lord. Had we the honour and favour to be invited to the table of a great prince, what especial care should we have to dress our bodies in a clean and decent garb, to compose our minds in order to expressions of all due respect to him, to bring nothing about us noisome or ugly, that might offend his sight or displease his mind? The like surely, and greater care we should apply, when we thus being called, go into God's presence and communion. We should in preparation for it, with all our power, endeavour to cleanse our souls from all impurity of thought and desire; from all iniquity and perverseness, from all malice, envy, hatred, anger, and all such evil dispositions, which are most offensive to God's all-piercing sight, and unbecoming his glorious presence; we should dress ourselves with all those comely ornaments of grace, with purity, humility, meekness and charity, which will render us acceptable and well-pleasing to him. We should compose

our minds into a frame of reverence and awful regard of God, into a lowly, calm, and tender disposition of heart, apt to express all the respect due to his presence, fit to admit the gracious illapses of his holy spirit, very susceptible of all holy and heavenly affections, which are suitable to such a communion, or may spring from it. We should therefore renounce and abandon, not only all vicious inclinations, and evil purposes, but even all worldly cares, desires and passions, which may distract or discompose us, that may make us dull and heavy, that may cause us to behave ourselves indecently or unworthily before God, or any way bereave us of the excellent fruits of so blessed an entertainment.

To these purposes we should, according to St. Paul's advice, examine and approve ourselves, considering our past actions, and our present inclinations. And accordingly, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer to God for his gracious assistance therein, work our souls into a hearty remorse of our past miscarriages, and a sincere resolution to amend for the future; forsaking all sin, endeavouring in all our actions to serve and please God, "purging out the old leaven of vice and wickedness," that we may feast and celebrate this passover, in which Christ is mystically sacrificed for us in the unleavened dispositions of sincerity and truth. Such are the duties previous to our partaking this sacrament.

Those which accompany it are, a reverent and devout affection of heart, with a suitable behaviour therein; an awful sense of mind, befitting the majesty of that presence wherein we appear; answerable to the greatness, goodness and holiness of him with whom we converse; becoming the sacredness of those mysteries which are exhibited to us, which St. Paul calls a "discerning" or distinguishing "our Lord's body." A devotion of heart, consisting in hearty contrition for our sins, which exposed our Saviour to the enduring such pains

pains there remembered ; in firm resolution to forsake the like hereafter, as injurious, dishonourable and displeasing to him ; in fervent love of him, as full of such wonderful goodness and charity towards us, in the most hearty thankfulness for those unconceivably great expressions of kindness towards us, in deepest humility from a sense of our unworthiness, to receive such testimonies of grace and favour from him ; “ We are unworthy to eat the crumbs that fall from his table ; ” how much more to be admitted into such degrees of honourable communion ; familiarity of close conjunction and union with him : Our devotion should therefore consist partly in a joyful consideration of the excellent privileges herein imparted, and of the blessed fruits accruing to us from his precious performances ; in a comfortable hope of obtaining and enjoying the benefits of his obedience and passion, by the assistance of his grace ; in steady faith and full persuasion of mind that he is (supposing our dutiful compliance) ready to bestow upon us all the blessings then exhibited ; in attentively fixing the eyes of our minds and all the powers of our souls, our understanding, will, memory, fancy, affection upon him, as willingly pouring forth his life for our salvation ; in motions of enlarged goodwill and charity towards all our brethren for his sake, in obedience to his will, and imitation of him. Thus should our souls be dressed when we present ourselves at Christ’s table, and partake of this holy sacrament.

But when we have even thus eaten of that bread, and drank of that cup, we must not imagine that our work is over ; there are yet many great but comfortable duties incumbent on us afterwards ; we must cherish all pious inclinations and affections, and labour to make them bring forth still more goodly fruits of obedience ; we must thoroughly digest that spiritual nourishment by becoming more firmly knit to our Saviour by higher degrees of faith and love ; by
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maintaining a more lively sense of his superabundant goodness; by cherishing those influences of grace which descend upon our hearts in this communion, and by improving them to nearer degrees of perfection in all piety and virtue; we must be very careful to approve ourselves in some measure worthy of that great honour and favour which God has vouchsafed us, in admitting us to so near approaches to himself; we must firmly adhere to those resolutions, perform those vows, and make good those engagements which in so solemn a manner, upon so great an occasion we made, and offered up to our God and Saviour. We must consider, that by the breach of such resolutions, by the violation of such engagements, our sins receiving such mighty aggravation of vain inconstancy and wicked peridulness, our guilt will be mightily increased: Our souls relapsing into so grievous a distemper, our spiritual strength will be exceedingly impaired; consequently hence our true comforts will be abated, our best hopes will be shaken, our eternal state will be desperately endangered.

There is one duty concerning this sacrament which we must not forbear touching, and that is, our gladly embracing any opportunity presented, for communicating therein; the doing so being not only a duty, but a great aid and instrument of piety, the neglecting it a grievous sin, and productive of great mischiefs to us.

The primitive Christians did very frequently use it, partaking therein, as it seems, at every time of their meeting for God's service. St. Luke says of them, "They continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and communion, and in breaking of bread and in prayer." And "when you meet together, it is not," as according to the intent and duty of meeting it should be, to "eat the Lord's Supper," says St. Paul. And Justin Martyr in his second apology, discoursing of the religious service of God in their assemblies, mentions it as a constant part of it. Epiphanius reports it as a custom in the church,
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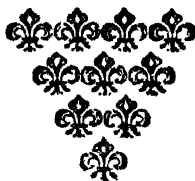
derived from the apostolical institution, to celebrate the eucharist thrice every week, that is, so often as they met to pray and praise God; which practice may well be conceived a great means of kindling and preserving in them that holy fervour of piety which they so illustriously expressed in their conversation, and in their gladsome suffering for Christ's sake. The remitting of that frequency, as it is certainly a sign and an effect, so in part it may be reckoned a cause of the degeneracy of Christian practice, into that great coldness and slackness which afterwards seized upon it, and now does apparently keep it in a languishing and half-dying state.

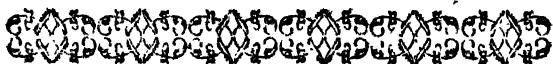
The rarer occasions therefore we now have of performing this duty (the which indeed was always esteemed the principal office of God's service; and the being deprived of which was also deemed the greatest punishment and infelicity that could be inflicted on, or befall a Christian) the more ready we should be to embrace them. If we dread God's displeasure; if we value our Lord and his benefits; if we tender the life, health and welfare of our souls, we shall not neglect it; for how can we but grievously offend God by such extreme rudeness, that when he kindly invites us to his table, we are averse from coming thither, or utterly refuse? That when he calls us into his presence we run from him? that when he with his own hand offers us inestimable mercies and blessings, we reject them? It is not only the breach of God's command who enjoined us to "do this," but a direct contempt of his favour and goodness, most clearly and largely exhibited in this office. And how can we bear any regard to our Lord, or be anywise sensible of his gracious performances in our behalf, if we are unwilling to join in thankful and joyful commemorations of them? How little do we love our own souls, if we suffer them to pine and starve for want of that food which God here dispenses for their sustenance and comfort? If we bereave them for enjoy-
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ing so high a privilege, so inestimable a benefit, so incomparable pleasures, as are to be found and felt in this service, or spring and flow from it, what reasonable excuse can we frame for such neglect? Are we otherwise employed? What business can there be more important than serving God and saving our own souls? Is it wisdom, in pursuance of any, the greatest affair here, to disregard the principal concern of our souls? Do we think ourselves unfit and unworthy to appear in God's presence? But is any man unworthy to obey God's commands? Is any man unfit to implore and partake of God's mercy, if he be not unwilling to do it? What unworthiness should hinder us from remembering our Lord's excessive charity towards us, and thanking him for it? from praying for his grace; from resolving to amend our lives? Must we, because we are unworthy, continue so still, by shunning the means of correcting and curing us? Must we increase our unworthiness by transgressing our duty? If we esteem things well, the consciousness of our sinfulness should rather drive us to it as to our medicine, than detain us from it. There is no man indeed who must not conceive and confess himself unworthy, therefore must no man come thither at God's call? If we have a sense of our sins, and a mind to leave them; if we have a sense of God's goodness, and a heart to thank him for it, we are so worthy that we shall be kindly received there, and graciously rewarded. If we will not take a little care to work these dispositions in ourselves, we are indeed unworthy; but the being so from our own perverse negligence, is a bad excuse for the neglect of our duty: He, who with an honest meaning, tho' with an imperfect devotion, addresses himself to the performance of this most holy part of God's worship, is far more excusable than he who declines it upon what score soever; no scrupulous shyness can ward us from blame. What then shall we say, if supine sloth, or profane contempt, are the causes of such neglect?

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I shall not here meddle with a controversy started by some casuists: Whether the prostituting this holy sacrament to any worldly interests, or enforcing it upon accounts merely political, is justifiable from scripture, or the nature of this sacred institution. The Ladies have not been much exposed to the temptation of unworthy receiving the Lord's Supper, to qualify them for some post of honour or profit in this transitory life; and therefore I shall leave such inquiries to others, and content myself with what has been said of the importance and necessity of the constant exercise of this duty.





Z E A L.

WHAT a noble subject is this? And yet alas! how has it lately been mistaken and abused? Heroick acts, or what is more, the heroick lives of saints, martyrs and confessors, present themselves to my thoughts. Here human nature enriched, adorned, and elevated to the utmost degree, by a participation of the divine one: Here the power of God's word; the energy of the Holy Ghost; the triumphs of faith; and the ecstasies of love might be described. Here the different excellencies of different virtues; and the different value of good works should be stated and settled; and the various paths in which men pursue the height of virtue, and the noblest designs be examined; and solid piety and true wisdom be refined from the alloys and mixtures of enthusiasm, superstition, fancy, or whatever else they are disfigured or debased by.

I do not exclude some degrees of zeal from every period of the Christian's life. Sincerity cannot subsist wholly without it: "The hunger and thirst after righteousness," which is the subject of one of our Saviour's beatitudes, must be more or less in every child of God. But it may signify one thing in the infant, another in the adult Christian: In the one, the conquest of sin, or rather of the relicks and remains of former sinful habits,

habits, and the attainment of habitual goodness, is the object of this hunger and thirst. In the other it imports a vehement desire of whatever is yet wanting to a farther accomplishment and consummation of righteousness already fixed and established; the intire and ultimate perfection of it in heaven; and in the mean time the promoting the divine glory upon earth, whatever it cost him to do so. By a state of zeal then I here mean virtue or holiness, not in the bud or in the blossom, but in its full strength and stature, grown up and ripe, and loaded with blessed fruits: That holiness I mean which is the result of illumination, or clearness of judgment, of the strength and force of holy resolution, and the vigour and energy of holy passions; that solid, spiritual, and operative religion, which may be felt and enjoyed by us ourselves, in the serenity and tranquillity of conscience, the longings and breathings of pious desires, the joys and pleasures of a rational assurance, discerned by the world in our lives and actions, in the modesty of our garb, in the plainness and humility of all things else that pertain to this part of life; in the temperance of our meats, the purity and heavenliness of our conversation, the moderation of our designs and enjoyments, the instruction of our families, with a tender and indefatigable watchfulness over them; the constancy of our attendance upon, and the devoutness of our deportment in the publick worship of God; and lastly in the activity and generosity of our charity; or, to speak my thoughts in the language of St. Paul, a state of zeal is that perfection or maturity of holiness which abounds "in the works of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our father." Now the end of all this is the advancing the glory of God; and therefore zeal is well enough described or defined by an ardent or vehement desire of doing so, either by our holiness, or by the fruit of it,

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good works. Of both which I will speak a little more particularly.

Of that perfection of holiness which constitutes this zeal, two things are to be enquired into :

Whether the perfect man must be possessor of all the treasures of goodness : Whether he must be adorned with a confluence and an accumulation of all virtue.

What height of virtue, what degree of holiness he may be supposed to be arrived at.

For the extent of righteousness; it is generally thought, universality is as essential and necessary a property of gospel-righteousness, as sincerity and perseverance ; that there is an inseparable connexion and union between all Christian virtues ; that he who wants any, must be concluded to have none. This want being not like a blemish, which diminishes the beauty, or a strain that weakens the strength ; but like a wound, that dissolves the frame and contexture of the natural body. This opinion is partly built upon reason, which tells us that there is a native lustre and beauty in all virtues ; and therefore there is no one in the whole system of morality but must be lovely and amiable to a good man ; partly upon scripture, in which we find the Christian represented “ holy in all manner of conversation, perfect in every good work, as filled with all the fulness of God, “ as fruitful in every good work,” and exhorted in the most comprehensive terms imaginable to the practice of every virtue. “ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are “ true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things “ are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things “ are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report : If “ there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think “ on these things.” To which may be added the numerous texts, importing, that faith is a principle of universal righteousness ; that the fear and love of God do equally oblige us to all his commandments ; and that the violation of one involves us in the guilt of all.

all. The result of all which seems to be plainly this, that the whole chain of graces is dissolved and lost, if there be but one link wanting. But at this rate, as the sincere man must be endowed with all manner of virtues, so must the perfect excel in all. Which assertions, if we closely consider both the one and the other, seem to have in them insuperable difficulties. There is a vast variety in the nature of men, in the states and conditions of life, and in the kinds and degrees, as well of the sanctifying, as of the miraculous gifts of God. St. Paul tells us, "Every man has his proper gift of God." From whence we may naturally infer, that every man is not capable of attaining to an excellence and eminence in every virtue; experience tells us, that there are different kinds of natures as well as soils; and that some kinds of virtue, like some kinds of seeds, will thrive better in one than in another. Nor does grace alter the matter much, since it generally accommodates itself to nature. It seems very hard, that every man should have the virtues of all men, of all states and capacities, every particular member the virtues of the whole church. The beauty and strength of the church, as well as of the natural body or commonwealth, consisting not in the all-sufficiency of every member, but in that variety of gifts or graces that cements and unites, enriches and supports the whole. To come up to the matter of fact: I read of the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job, the love of Mary Magdalene, the zeal of St. Peter, and the labours and travels of St. Paul; which firmness and constancy is too mean a name for. These virtues seem therefore to have been peculiar excellencies of those persons; and to have shone in them with more transcendent lustre than any other; These seem to have been the virtues for which nature and grace eminently qualified them, and to which the providence of God more immediately and directly called them. All this considered, seems it not enough to come to the perfection of these
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great men? May it not suffice to excel in these virtues, which nature, grace, and providence prescribed? May not the perfect be allowed to want what he does not need? Would one not think, that in many respects it were enough for him to be free from this or that vice, rather than to expect that he should be adorned with this or that virtue which he has no use for? Especially if by virtue we understand strictly such a habit as enables us to act easily and delightfully.

The perfect man must not only be set free from the dominion of sin, but also abstain even from a single act of presumptuous wickedness: He must neither criminally omit a duty, nor deliberately commit any thing repugnant to it.

He must be endowed with spiritual wisdom and understanding, with faith, hope, charity, with the graces which are called universal, because necessary and indispensable to all as Christians, abstracting from their particular capacities and relations, and that too in an eminent degree, so as "to be strong in the grace which is in Jesus Christ. This will render him holy in all manner of conversation, and thoroughly furnished to all good works." These two things constitute universal righteousness, complete the perfect man, and fully satisfy the texts alledged.

He must excel in those virtues which are most natural. Those virtues are called natural, to which grace and nature most powerfully dispose and incline him: For these he seems to be designed by God; these will soon grow up to maturity, and much will be their fruit, and great their beauty. It is not supposed all this while, that the perfect man ought not so far to subdue and rectify his temper, as not only to overcome the sin of his constitution, but in some degree possess the virtue that is most repugnant to it. But to expect him to be eminent here, is too hard and unreasonable. For here, when he has bestowed much pains and
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travel, much care and cost, his progress may not be so much as where he bestowed least.

Let no man mistake contracted habits for nature, and then conclude that it will be impossible for him to attain the perfection of this or that virtue, through a natural incapacity. Let no man satisfy or content himself in a weak and impotent state of that virtue which is directly opposed to the sin of his constitution, but let him think that here, or any where, his virtue must be always growing, and let him not doubt but that our Saviour's promise, as far as it can be accomplished upon earth, belongs to his sincere endeavour here: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

The perfect man must be eminent in those virtues which are most necessary; such are those which his particular calling and station, or any other dispensation of providence he is under, require of him. Whatever virtues may be more delightful, these are more important; others may be more natural; these have more of use, and more of merit. A man may fall short of perfection in others, without either disparagement or guilt; but deficiency in these can hardly escape both. Besides, every thing is lovely in its place, and in its time. There is a peculiar grace and lustre that attends the virtues of a man's station, that is scarcely to be found in any other. I would therefore have my perfect man truly great in his own business, and shine with a dazzling lustre in his own sphere. To this purpose surely speaks the advice of St. Paul, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity: He that ruleth, with diligence: He that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

As there is a different guilt in sins, so there are different merits in virtue. As amongst miraculous, so amongst sanctifying gifts, some are more excellent than others; and he is the most perfect man, who is enriched with the most perfect gifts. The three heroick virtues of the gospel are, faith, love, and humility. Nor do I presumptuously, contrary to the apostle, exclude hope, but comprehend it under faith. Of faith, humility, and love, we have treated in the preceding chapters, and have here considered the extent or compass of the perfect man's virtues; and the sum total is, in some he must excel, because natural and easy; in others, because necessary: Universal ones he cannot want; they are essential to Christianity: Others of a peculiar nature he may, unless his circumstances exact them. Nor is this any diminution of his perfection. Patience, fortitude, moderation, and vigilance, &c. are the virtues of earth, not heaven; and yet none think the blessed inhabitants of that place imperfect, because not endowed with habits which they do not want. Above all, he that will be perfect must abound in those graces, which are of the most heroick nature, faith, love, and humility. For these are they which most effectually exalt man above himself, and above the world, which inflame him with a zeal for the honour of God, and good of men, and enable him to surmount the difficulties he meets with, in prosecuting this glorious design.

I am next to enquire to what height, to what degrees of virtue the perfect man may arrive. Reason and scripture seem to press us on towards an endless progress in virtue: Yet both seem to propose to us such a state of perfection as attainable, beyond which we cannot go; that so the beginner may not despair of perfection, nor the perfect abate any thing of their vigilance and their industry. Such a degree of excellence, to which nothing can be added, such a height above which there is no room to soar, if applied to man in this world, is surely but an imaginary

nary notion, to dream of such a perfection, were to forget our nature, and our state. No sagacity of judgment, no strength of resolution, no felicity of circumstances, can ever advance us to this height. Such a perfection as this, which is incapable of any increase, belongs to God alone, and must certainly be denied in man; in whom one would think the appetites of the body can never be so entirely subdued, that there should be no place to extend his conquest, or render his victory more entire and complete: And in whom one would think the Spirit of God should never reside in that measure, that there should be nothing to be added to his fulness. It is hard to conceive how we should study the system of divine faith; how we should daily reflect upon our lives and actions, without growing in spiritual wisdom and understanding. It is hard to conceive how we should give God, the world, and ourselves, repeated proofs of our integrity in the day of trial, without increasing our strength and assurance. And love must naturally increase with these; whence it is that Saint Paul, acknowledging himself not yet perfect, resolves, "Thar
 " forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching
 " forwards to those things that are before, he would
 " press on towards the mark for the prize of the high
 " calling of God in Christ Jesus."

If we come to fact and practice, one would be tempted to think that the disciples of our Lord and Master had arrived at that state, wherein their business was not climbing higher, but rather to make good the ground they had gained; which would render Saint Paul's victory over the body more complete, who assures us, "I am crucified
 " with Christ:" And again, "I am crucified to the world,
 " and the world is crucified to me." What could render the authority and dominion of his mind more absolute, or its graces more consummate and entire, who could say with truth, "It is not I who live, but Christ who
 " lives in me?" What would you have added to that faith and love, which made him ready "not only to

“ be bound, but to die at Jerusalem ;” which made him long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ ? As to those words of his, “ Forgetting those things that are behind, “ and reckoning forwards,” &c. they relate to his trials and performances, to his perils and conflicts, not to his attainments. He does not here deny himself to be perfect, though that might well enough have become his modesty and humility, but only that he was not to look upon himself as already at his goal, a conqueror, and crowned ; there being much yet behind to do and suffer, notwithstanding all that he had passed through.

If we consult reason, will it not be apt to tell us, that as every being has its bounds set it ; so has every perfection too ? That there is a stature, as of the natural, so of the spiritual man, beyond which it cannot grow ? That as to grace, no more can be infused, than our natures are capable of : Otherwise, like too rich a cordial, it will not strengthen but fire our natures ; or, like too dazzling a light, it will not assist but oppress our faculties. And does not the parable of our Master countenance this, wherein he tells us, that God gave to one five talents, to another two, to another one ; to every man according to his ability ? By which one would think our Lord insinuates, that the measures of grace are usually distributed in proportion to the capacities of nature ; and that he who improved his two talents into four, arrived at his proper perfection, as well as he who improved his five into ten : It being as absurd to expect, that the perfection of every man should be the same, as to expect that all mens bodies should be of the same height, or their minds of the same capacity. Reflecting on all this together, one cannot but be of opinion, that some have actually arrived at that strength of faith, at that ardour of love, that they seemed to have been incapable of any considerable accessions in this life. But yet new occasions may still demand new virtues ; which were indeed before contained and included in faith and love, as fruits
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*and trees are in their seeds. Some degree of original corruption may still be lurking in the most sanctified nature, and some venial defects and imperfections or other, may still leave room for the greatest of saints to extend his conquest. Besides, it is hard to determine or fix the bounds of knowledge, and every degree of light makes way for more. After all, nothing hinders but that the path of the perfect man may as well with respect to his righteousness as his fortunes, be like "the shining light, which shines more and more, unto the perfect day of a blessed eternity."

The motives to perfection, the fruit of it, the means and method of attaining it, having been thus discoursed of, we proceed to consider zeal as it consists in good works. And now let us any one think, that pains have been taken to advance the illumination of a sinner, to knock off his chains and fetters, to raise him as far as may be above the corruption of nature, and the defects and infirmities of life, to scatter those lazy fogs and mists which hung upon his spirits, and to enrich him with heroick virtues: Let no man, I say, fancy that we have been labouring to do all this, that after all my perfect man may sit down like an Epicurean god, and enjoy himself; might talk finely of solitary shades and gardens, and spend a precious life fitted for the noblest designs, in a sluggish retirement. No, no; as virtue is the perfection of human life, so is action the perfection of virtue; and zeal is that principle of action which is required in a saint of God. Accordingly the scripture describes this great, this happy man, as "full of the Holy Ghost, fervent in spirit, zealous of good works:" Such a one was Moses, "mighty in word and deed," as well as "learned in all the knowledge of the Egyptians:" Such a one was St. Stephen, as full of divine ardor and irresistible fervency of spirit, as of an irresistible wisdom: And such a one was the excellent Cornelius, a devout man, one who had transfused the fear of God from his own bosom, throughout

his family and relations, and friends too: "One that gave much alms, and prayed to God always." What need we multiply instances? This is that which distinguishes the perfect man from all others; the victories of faith, the labours of charity, the constancy and patience of hope, and the ardors of devotion.

Need we here distinguish the zeal of God, from the fierceness of faction, of which we have seen and felt the terrible effects; from the cruelty of superstition, from the wakeful and indefatigable activity of avarice and ambition; from the unruly heats of pride and passion, and from the implacable fury of revenge? It needs not; no foolish, no false, fantastick, earthly, or devilish principle, can counterfeit divine zeal. It is a perfection, that shines with such a peculiar lustre, with such an heavenly majesty and sweetness, that nothing else can imitate it. It is always pursuing good, the honour of God, and happiness of man. "It contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." But it contends as earnestly too to root out wickedness, and implant the righteousness of the gospel in the world. It is not eager for the articles of a sect or party, and unconcerned for catholick ones. We have had of late such distinguished instances of false zeal, that one can hardly now mistake it for the true. False zeal glares with warm words; it is full of froth and foam, but spends itself in professions, and never appears in actions. He who makes most noise with his zeal, if his life be examined, will be found wanting in the essentials of religion: He is in a mighty concern for the outsides of it; but takes no care to adorn the doctrine he professes by his good works. True zeal will ever be accompanied with charity and humility, which are inseparable from it. And whoever pretends to the one without the other, is an impostor. His zeal is counterfeit, his morals will belie his principles; and he is of the family of him who is the father of falsehood, he devil. When true zeal presses for reformation, it
begins

begins at home, and sets a bright example. Look into the lives of our most furious zealots, who are ever breathing fire and flame, and see how their actions answer their professions. True zeal is meek and gentle under its own affronts, but warm and bold against those which are offered to God. Is the zeal of our age of this kind? What are our zealots most concerned for; their own power and interest, or the glory of God? Try them by that standard, bring them to that touchstone, and you will soon know how to separate the goats from the sheep. Though love fills the sails of a holy zeal, divine wisdom and prudence give it ballast; and as a very learned doctor of our church phrases it, "It has no heat but what is tempered and refected by humility and charity." Virtues which are in these our days never met with in the composition of that zeal, which carries with it all the merit, all the honour, and all the reward.

Need we in the next place, fix and state the various degrees of zeal? Alas! it is not requisite, zeal being no thing else but an ardent thirst of promoting the divine glory by the best works. It is plain, the more excellent the work, and the more it costs, the more perfect, the more exalted the zeal that performs it. When like Mary we quit the lumber and distraction of this world, and chuse religion for our portion, then do we love it in good earnest. When with the disciples we can say, "Lord, we have forsaken all and followed thee, or are ready to do so," when we are continually blessing and praising God; when, at the necessities of Christ's church require it, we are ready to call "nothing our own;" when we are prepared, if the will of God be so, to "resist even unto blood; when nothing is dear, nothing delightful to us, but God and holiness, then have we reached the height of zeal. In a word, Zeal is nothing else but the love of God made perfect in us. And if we would see it drawn to the life, we must contemplate it in the

bleſſed Jeſus, who is the perfect pattern of heroick love. How boundleſs was his love when the whole world, and how transcendent when a world of enemies was the object of it? How indefatigable was his zeal? how wakeful, how meek, how humble, how firm and reſolved? His labours and travels, ſelf-denial, prayers and tears; his ſilence and patience, his agony and blood poured out for his perſecutors, inſtruct us fully what divine love, what divine zeal is. And now even at this time love reigns in him, as he reigns in heaven; love is ſtill the predominant, the darling paſſion of his ſoul. Worthy art thou, O Jeſus, to receive honour, and glory, and dominion! Worthy art thou to ſit down with thy Father on his throne! Worthy art thou to judge the world, becauſe thou haſt loved, becauſe thou haſt been zealous unto death; becauſe thou haſt overcome! Some there are indeed who have followed thy bright example, tho' at a great diſtance: As the martyrs and confeſſors: And thoſe beloved and admired princes, who have governed their kingdoms in righteouſneſs, to whom the honour of God and the good of the world have been far dearer than pleaſure, than empire, than abſolute power, or that ominous blaze, which is now called glory. It is the work of angels to maſhal the field of glory in the end of all things.

“ Oh, my Lord, may I at leaſt be one to fill the
 “ train of this triumphant proceſſion, in that bleſſed
 “ day, when thou ſhalt crown the zeal and patience of
 “ thy ſaints!”

Having given a ſhort account of zeal, we ſhall now endeavour to kindle it in every breaſt, by ſome few conſiderations, which will at once evince the neceſſity, and declare the truth of it.

Our own ſalvation and happineſs depend upon it. For without this we rejeſt, or at leaſt fruſtrate, the
 “ counſels of God againſt our own ſouls.” It was for this Chriſt died, that “ he might purify to himſelf a
 “ peculiar people, zealous of good works.” This is
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the great end of our election, "God hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." Which is to be explained by that passage, where God is said to have "before ordained, that we should walk in good works." And the beginning of the texts minds us, that it is for this end God imparts the light of his word, and the vigour of his spirit; that for this end he sanctifies and renews our nature. "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." This is that which all the great and gracious promises of God immediately aim at. Our Lord in his narrative of the last judgment, and elsewhere, and his apostles almost in innumerable places, have with great power, and great earnestness, inculcated this doctrine, that we shall be "judged according to our works." That immortality and glory is the portion not of wisdom, but patience and charity; not of an orthodox faith and specious pretensions, but of righteousness and zeal. For the incorruptible, the never-fading crown, is a crown of righteousness. Or if men will be judged by their belief, which is not the language of the gospel, this does not alter the matter at all, since faith itself will be judged by its works. And as a happy eternity depends upon our zeal, so nothing else can give us any comfortable, any rational assurance of it in this life. The reason is plain, because it is zeal which is the only unquestionable proof of our integrity; and good works are the fruit which alone can evidence the life and truth of our faith and love; "hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works: Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." Dost thou believe in God? why art thou not "holy as he is holy?" Dost thou believe in Jesus? why dost thou not "deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow him?" why dost thou not walk as he walked? Dost thou believe a judgment to come? why dost thou not "work out thy

“salvation with fear and trembling?” why dost thou not “prepare to meet thy God?” why art thou not “rich in good works,” that thou mayest “lay up a foundation against the time to come, and lay hold on eternal life?” Nor are good works less necessary to prove our love than faith. Certainly, if we love holiness, if we “hunger and thirst after righteousness,” we shall never live in a direct contradiction to the strongest passions of our soul. We shall never refuse to gratify an inclination which is not only fervent in us, but its gratification will procure us eternal rewards too. If we love God, we cannot but seek his glory, we cannot but desire to maintain communion with him. And if so, do we know any sacrifice that is more acceptable to God than good works? Do we know any that he delights in more than zeal? Do we love the blessed Jesus? Are not good works the very test of this love which himself has appointed? “If a man love me, he will keep my commandments. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. The love of Christ,” says the apostle, “constrains us;” what to do? “to live not to ourselves, but to him that died for us, and rose again.” What other returns can we make to Jesus? He sits on the right hand of God. “All power is given him in heaven and in earth.” He does himself need not our ministry, nor want our service and charity; but hear what he says; “In as much as you did it to one of these my little ones, you have done it to me.”

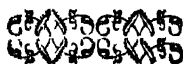
Our zeal is indispensably necessary to the welfare and happiness of others. Do we regard our neighbour's eternal interest? It is zeal represses sin, and propagates righteousness; it is zeal defends the faith, and suppresses heresy and error; it is zeal converts the unbeliever, and builds up the believer; it is zeal that wakens the drowsy, quickens the lukewarm, strengthens the weak, and inflames the good with a holy emulation; it is zeal that baffles all objections, refutes all calumnies, and vanquishes all oppositions raised against religion, and oppresses its enemies with
shame

shame and confusion ; it is, in a word, zeal, and zeal alone, that can make religion appear lovely and delightful, and reconcile the world to it ; for this alone can “ adorn the gospel.” It renders virtue more conspicuous, more taking in life and example, than it can be in the precepts and descriptions of words : Nor is zeal less serviceable to the temporal than eternal interest of mankind. When God laid the foundation of the world, he laid the foundation of virtue too ; and when he formed man, he wove the necessity of good works into his very nature. How necessary is justice to poor creatures who lie so open to wrongs and injuries ? How indispensable is charity or generosity to those who are exposed to so many accidents, to so many wants, to such a vicissitude of fortune ? And being all subject to so many follies and infirmities, to so many mistakes and fancies ; how strong must be our obligation to mutual forbearance, patience, and gentleness ? In a word, Sin and misery abound in the world ; and if there were not virtues and good works to balance the one, and to relieve and support us under the other, life would be intolerable. Thus revealed and natural religion do necessarily terminate and center in a zeal for good works as their ultimate end, and utmost perfection in this life ; and that rule of our Saviour, “ Whatever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them,” is an abstract not only of the law and the prophet, but of the book of nature too ; and this single principle, if sincerely pursued, will ferment and work us up to the noblest heights of zeal. I might here, if it were necessary, easily shew that zeal has as happy an influence on the public as the private ; that this must animate that justice and mercy which supports the throne ; that it is the soul of that honour, integrity, generosity, and religion, which support the states and kingdoms of the world, and without which all politick systems must needs tend to a dissolution. But by what

has been said already, this is most evidently made appear. The next thing to be considered is:


That zeal ministers most effectually to the glory of God. For if zeal be in itself thus lovely, thus necessary; if the fruits and effects of it be thus serviceable to the temporal and eternal interest of man, what a lovely, what an agreeable notion of God shall we form from this one consideration of him, that he is the great author of it? That he is the origin and fountain of that light and heat, of that strength and power, of which it is compounded and constituted? He commands and exacts it; he exacts and encourages to it by the promise of an eternal crown, and the ravishing fruition of himself: He has planted the seeds of it in our nature; and he cherishes them by the blessed and vigorous influences of his word and spirit. How gracious is the divine nature! How gracious is the divine government! when the substance of his laws is, that we should love as brethren; that we should clothe the naked; feed the hungry; deliver the captive; instruct the foolish; comfort the afflicted; forgive one another, if need be, seven times a day, and such like. If to do all this be an argument of being "regenerate and born of God;" if this be a proof of his spirit ruling in us, his nature communicated to us, and his image stamp'd upon us; how amiable must God be, when we discern so much benefit and so much loveliness in those qualities which are but faint and imperfect resemblance of him! In a word, the holiness of his children and servants, is a demonstration of the holiness of God himself, and in this consists the lustre of divine glory. Holiness is the flower of all his attributes; the most perfect, because the most comprehensive of all his divine perfections; for holiness includes wisdom, power, and goodness. As to goodness, the case is so plain, that holiness and goodness are commonly used as terms equivalent. As to wisdom, it is evident that no action is commendable and

and lovely, whatever it be, unless the principle, the motive of it, be wise and rational; therefore wisdom cannot be separated from the notion of holiness. Power must needs be comprised in it too; for beneficence, which is at least one great branch of holiness, must unavoidably imply power in the benefactor, and impotence and want in the beneficiary. This is the notion wherein holiness, when ascribed to God in Scripture, is generally taken. "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, " heaven and earth are full of thy glory," expresses the greatness and majesty, as well as the rectitude and purity of the divine nature: and to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, is, in the language of the Scripture, not only to love him for his goodness, but to revere and fear him for his majesty and greatness. The excellencies of the creatures, their fitness and subserviency to the great end of their creation, is the glory of the Creator, just as the beauty, strength, and convenience of the work is the honour of the architect. If the sun, moon, and stars, the irrational and inanimate parts of the creation, shew forth the glory of God, how much more do spiritual and rational beings? Virtue is the perfection of reason, and zeal of virtue. For this is that which directly and immediately advances those great ends that are dearest to God, as has been abundantly made out.





P E R F E C T I O N.

OME seem to have entertained such a notion of religion, as if moderation here were as necessary as any where else. They look upon zeal as an excess of righteousness, and can be well enough content to want degrees of glory, if they can but save their souls. To which end they can see no necessity of perfection. Now I would beseech such seriously to lay to heart that salvation and damnation are things of no common importance; and therefore it highly concerns them not to be mistaken in the notion they form to themselves of religion. For the nature of things will not be altered by their fancies, nor will God be mocked or imposed on. If we deal sincerely with ourselves, as in this case it certainly behoves us to do, we must frame our idea of religion, not from the opinions, the manners, or fashions of the world, but from the scriptures. And we must not interpret these by our own inclinations, but we must judge of the duties they prescribe by those descriptions of them, by those properties and effects which we find there. We must weigh the design and end of religion, which is to promote the glory of God, and the good of man, and to raise us above the world and the body. We must then see how our platform, or model of religion, suits with it; and if, after we have done this, we are not fully satisfied in the true bounds and limits which part vice and virtue, it cannot but be safest

safest for us to err on the right hand. We ought always to remember too, that the repeated exhortations in scripture to diligence, and that the most earnest and indefatigable ones, to vigilance, to fear and trembling, to patience, to steadfastness, and such like, are utterly inconsistent with an easy, lazy, gentle religion. That the life of Jesus is the fairest and fullest comment on his doctrine; and that we never are to follow the example of a corrupt world, but of the best men and the best ages. 'This one thing alone will convince us, what endeavours, what virtues, are necessary to gain an incorruptible crown. See with what courage, nay joy too, they "took up their cross and followed him!" How generous were their aims! The riches of their liberality were conspicuous in the very depth of their poverty. What plainness and singleness of heart? what grace and warmth? what peace and joy shewed itself in their conversation! What modesty, what humility in their garb, deportment, and the whole train of life! How frequent, how fervent, and how long too were their prayers and retirements? In fine, the spirit and genius of a disciple of Christ discovered itself in all they said and did; and the virtues of their lives did as evidently distinguish a Christian from a Jew or Pagan, as their faith. How lovely was religion then? how full its joy? how strong its confidence? Then did Christians truly overcome the world. Then did they live above the body. Then was the cross of Christ more delightful than the ease or honour, the pride or pleasure of a sinful life. Then did they truly, through the spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Let us now compare our lives with theirs, and then sit down content with poor and beggarly attainments, if we can. Let us put our virtues in the scale against theirs; and if we have any modesty, the inequality will put us out of countenance; we shall blush at our vanity, and shall not have the confidence to expect the same crown, the same kingdom,

dom, with them. But as too lax a notion of religion is apt to beget too much indifference and unconcernedness, so will it be said too exalted a one is apt to beget despair, which is a no less obstacle of perfection.

Many there are, who forming their judgment upon the slips and defects of good men, and the corruption of human nature, conceive perfection to be a mere imaginary notion. They believe indeed, that considering how apt man is to fall short of his duty, it is very fit that the rule prescribed him should be exact, and that he should be frequently pressed and exhorted to perfection. But that the thing itself is too difficult for mortal man to attain in this life. To this objection I must oppose these few things, which I believe will be sufficient to remove it.

The beginning of virtue is the most difficult part of it. The nearer we approach to perfection, the easier as well as pleasanter is religion: And therefore, whoever startles at the difficulties which lie in the way to an exalted virtue, has as much reason to be flattered at those which will encounter him upon his first entrance into religion, and yet these must be conquered.

The avoiding the difficulties of religion, does but plunge us into worse. We are necessarily under this dilemma: If we will attain the peace and tranquillity of the mind, we must mortify and reduce the appetite of the body. If on the other hand, we propose to gratify the appetites of the body, and enjoy the pleasure of sin, we cannot do so without offering violence to the mind. And if such be the war and opposition between the soul and the body, that there is no way to a true and well-fitted peace and pleasure, but by the reduction and mortification of the one or the other, then it will be easy to resolve what we are to do. For those appeals which Atheists themselves make to reason, proclaim the soul of man to be the ruling and noblest part of him; besides, the soul is the more vital, the more tender and sensible part of us; and consequently,
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the affliction of this must render us far more miserable than any hardships or difficulties virtue can impose upon the body. Whatever be the difficulties of virtue, they will soon vanish, if we often call to mind, that peace and joy are the fruits of virtue, but shame and remorse those of sin; that no man ever yet repented of resisting and conquering his lusts, but no man ever yet did not repent of following them, unless he died as much a brute as he lived. That heaven is a cheap purchase whatever it costs us, but the pleasure of sin a very dear one, how easily soever we may come by it; and that we are not our own masters; there is a God to whom we stand accountable for our actions: And consequently whether we will, or will not, we must either undergo the hardship and discipline of virtue, or the eternal plagues and punishments of sin.

The truth is, this opinion of the impossibility of perfection, has both been begot and cherished by those wild schemes of it, which have been drawn by the hands of a flaming, indeed, but an indiscreet zeal. But we have here recommended to the world no fantastick or enthusiastick perfection. We have advanced no heights of virtue, but what many do, we hope, at this day actually feel and experiment in themselves: None we are sure but what the followed of the blessed Jesus actually attained and practised. "Be ye followers of us," says the apostle, "as we are of Christ." Their lives were as bright a rule as their doctrine; and by their own actions they demonstrated the power of the faith they taught. They did not, like the Scribes and Pharisees, "bind heavy burdens upon others, and not move them with their finger." They did not, like Plato and Aristotle, magnify temperance and modesty, at the tabernacles and carnivals of princes; nor commend the pleasure of wisdom, in the garden of Epicurus. But they lived as they taught, unspotted by the pleasures, unbroken by the troubles of the world; modest, serene, equal and heavenly-minded; in honour or dishonour,

dishonour, in want or abundance, liberty or prison, life or death. Let us then no longer object or dispute, but with faith and patience be followers of those who have inherited the promises.

“ Being encompassed with a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us : and let us run with patience the race that is set before us ; looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith ; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame ; and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

We come now to speak of those, who will look upon this setting up the doctrine of perfection, as a design against the pleasures of mankind. What, says such a one, shall I let go my present pleasures out of my hands, to hunt after I know not what, and I know not where? Shall I quit pleasures that are every where obvious, for such as have no being. it may be but in speculation? Or at least are never to be enjoyed by any, but some few rare and happy creature, the favourites of God and nature? Pleasures that have matter and substance in them, for such as I can no more grasp and relish, than I can dreams and visions? But to this we answer, All this pretty talk is stupid ignorance and gross mistake. For as to innocent and virtuous pleasure, no man needs part with it. I endeavour not to deprive man of this, but to refine and purify it. And he who prefers either silly or vicious pleasure before religion, is wretchedly mistaken. Perfect religion is full of pleasure, had we but once arrived at true purity of heart. What can be so full of pleasure as the business of religion? What can be more delightful than blessing, than praising God, to a grateful soul? Hallelujahs to a soul snatched from the brink of destruction, into the bosom of its Master? What can be
more

more transporting than the melting tenderness of a holy contrition, made up, like Mary Magdalene's, of tears and hopes, sorrow and love, humility and glory, confusion and confidence, shame and joy? What can be more transporting than love, the love of a Christian, when he is ~~an~~ love, as God is love; when he "desires nothing in heaven, nor on earth, but God; when all things are dung and dross to him in comparison of Jesus?" If the pleasures of the world be more transporting than those of religion, it is because our faith is weak, our love imperfect, and our life unsteady. A constant exalted pleasure is, I grant it, the fruit of perfection alone. The peace and joy of the Holy Ghost reigns no where but where that zeal and love, which is an effect of the fulness of the Spirit, reigns too.

That the pleasures of the world are more numerous or obvious than those of religion, is altogether a false and groundless fancy. In every place, and in every state, do the pleasures of virtue wait upon the perfect man. They depend not, like those of the body, on a thousand things that are not in our power, but only on God and our own integrity. These obstacles of perfection being thus removed, and the mind of man being fully convinced of the happiness that results from a state of perfection, and of his obligation to surmount the difficulties which obstruct his way to it, there seems to be nothing now left to disappoint the success of this discourse, but somewhat too much fondness for the world, or somewhat too much indulgence to the body.

There is a love of the world, which though it be not either for the matter or degree of it, criminal enough to destroy our sincerity and our hopes of salvation, yet it is strong enough to abate our vigour, hinder our perfection, and bereaves us of many degrees of pleasure at present, and glory hereafter. The indications
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of this kind of love of the world, are too much concern for the pomp and shew of life, too much exactness in the modes and customs of it, too quick a sense of honour and reputation, pre-eminence and praise; too much haste, and too much industry to grow rich, to "add house to house, land to land, and to clothe ourselves with tick and heavy clay;" too big a relish of the pleasures of the world, too great a gaiety of mind upon the successes, too much dejection upon the disasters and disappointments of it; too much care, and too much diligence, and incumbering and milking one's self too far in worldly affairs; too much diversion, too much ease. These, I say, are the symptoms of a mind tainted with a love of the world, tho' not so far as to sickness and death. However, it will be enough to check the vigour and vitiate the relish of the mind. Now the only way to overcome this defect, and to captivate the mind intirely to the love and service of religion and virtue, is to consider frequently and seriously the rewards of perfection, the pleasure that will attend it in another life. Had the young man in the gospel done this, had he had as lively a notion, and as true an estimate, of the riches of eternity, as he had of temporal ones, he would never "have gone away sorrowful," when he was advised to have exchanged the treasures of earth for those of heaven. Had the soul of Martha been as much taken up with the thoughts of eternity as that of Mary, she would have made the same choice as she did. They who often think, how soon the fashion, the pomp and grandeur of this world pass away, and how much better their heavenly country is than their earthly; how much more lasting, and how much more glorious the new Jerusalem, "that city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God," than this city of ours, which may be overthrown in a moment; will neither weep nor rejoice with too much passion; neither buy nor possess with too much application of mind. To conclude; He who so often
and

and devoutly thinks of that day, wherein "Christ who is our life shall appear, and we shall appear with him in glory," that he comes to love and long for it; such a one shall have no great taste of the honours of this world, of the pleasures or interests of this life; nor will he be slothful or remiss, but fervent in spirit, serving the "Lord;" whatever degrees of affection he had for any thing of that nature, they will all vanish; he will have no emulation but for good works; no ambition but for the glory which is eternal. In the pursuit of this will he lay out the strength and vigour of his mind; for this he will retrench his profit; for this he will deny his pleasure; for this he will be content to be obscure, mean, and laborious; for if the world be once crucified to him, he will the more easily bear the being crucified to it.

After all, there is an infirmity in the flesh; against which, if we do not guard ourselves, if we do not struggle heartily, we shall miscarry: "The spirit is willing," said our Saviour, "but the flesh is weak." Without ample care and much watchfulness, the vigour of our minds will be relaxed; the exaltation of our spirits will flag and droop, and we shall soon lose the relish there is in religion. The most effectual remedies against this frailty and fickleness of our nature, are "godly fear," and "steadfastness of hope."

The purity and presence of God; the strictness and impartiality of a judgment to come; the loss of an eternal crown; the terrors of eternal punishment; the number and strength of temptations; the deplorable falls of the greatest saints, and the conscience of our own weakness, will not fail to work in us this "godly fear." Let us then not only begin, but also "perfect holiness in the fear of God. Blessed is he that feareth always."

The "steadfastness of hope," of hope that waits and longs for the coming of our Lord, will invite us often to take a view of Canaan; will often fill the mind with

with the beauties and the glories of eternity; the rest and transports of another world; the love of God, and of Jesus; incorruptible crowns; the Hallelujahs of angels; the shouts of victory; the fruit of the tree of life; the streams that water the paradise of God; and every such object will chide us out of our weakness and cowardise; every such thought will upbraid us out of our laziness and negligence; we shall hear always sounding in our ears the words of Jesus to his disciples, "What, can you not watch with me one hour;" and yet do you expect to reign with me for ever? Or those to the church of Laodicea; "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me upon my throne, as I have overcome, and am sit down with my Father on his throne."

The reader will all along perceive, that when we are speaking of perfection, we mean it only in that sense which human nature is capable of. We do not understand the perfection of angels and the blessed saints in heaven, who, with their dust, shook off all the frailties and infirmities which are inseparable from man in this life: But infirmities and frailties that may be cured, or that men do not cherish, and are fond of, if they do labour earnestly to get rid of them by watchfulness and prayer, will not hinder their reaching that degree of perfection which will be acceptable to God, and give upon earth a taste of heaven. Such a soul will be alone armed against temptation; and as the paths of this life are slippery, if he trips ever so little, will soon recover himself; and even if he falls, shall never receive a wound that is mortal; contrition and grace will supply him with a healing balm, which thro' the merits of our Saviour will soon set him right again, so as to go courageously and successfully in the way wherein he ought to walk.

Whenever the reader is in the vigour of spirit, in the ardours of faith, of love, when he is inflamed with a holy desire to arrive at that state of perfection, which is so pleasing in the sight of God, let him address
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the throne of grace with these or the like petitions; and what he ask in faith, will surely be granted him.

“ O my God, and my Father, increase the knowledge
 “ of thy word, and the grace of thy Spirit in me: En-
 “ able me to perfect holiness in thy fear, and to hold
 “ fast the steadfastness of my hope unto the end. Par-
 “ don all the sins and errors of my life, and accept of
 “ my services, through Jesus Christ. And because, tho’
 “ after all we can do, we are unprofitable servants, thy
 “ infinite bounty will yet certainly recompense our sin-
 “ cere endeavours to promote thy glory; let me find my
 “ reward from thee, or rather do thou thyself vouchsafe
 “ to be my reward. I should have ever thought myself
 “ unworthy to have put this petition to thee, O thou
 “ glorious and incomprehensible Majesty, had not thy
 “ own goodness, thy own Spirit, kindled this ambition
 “ in me. Behold what manner of love is this, that we
 “ should be called the Sons of God! These are the
 “ words of thy servant St. John. And now therefore,
 “ my soul can never be at rest till I awake at the last
 “ day after thy likeness. I can never be satisfied till I
 “ behold thy glory: Which vouchsafe me, I beseech
 “ thee, by thy mercy and thy faithfulness, by the suf-
 “ ferings and intercession of thy dearly beloved Son.
 “ Amen.”





S C R U P T U R E S.

IN matters of religion and another world, nothing is more ordinarily observable, than that those people are wont to have the greatest fears, who have the least reason for them. Though good Christians think the best of others, they are generally very suspicious of themselves: They have a deep sense of the danger of sin, and a full conviction of the fatal end of disobedience; which makes them think, that in a matter wherein it concerns them so highly not to be mistaken, they can never be over-jealous of their own hearts, or too cautious, lest after all, the insupportable punishments of sin should fall to be their own portion.

This they do in an especial manner, if in any material point, upon which, as to the sentence of life or death, the gospel lays a great stress, they are ignorant and erroneous: For there are no terrors in the world comparable to those of religion; nor have any men upon earth so much reason to be afraid, as they who are in danger to fall under them. If there is any thing therefore which will be of great account in the last judgment; or, what is all one, which they think will be severely accounted for; and they either find themselves to be guilty of it, or but fancy that they are (which is the same thing in the effect of it) they must needs be fearfully perplexed, and deprived of all peace and comfort, tho' they are really in the greatest safety. It is true indeed, that in the end they shall be no losers; nor

not shall those mistaken fears ever be fulfilled upon them: Because at the last day God will judge them according to his own rule, which they have really performed, tho' they knew it not, and not according to their errors and misrepresentations of it. Their errors shall in no wise pervert his truth; for he sees what they are, however they may mistake it; and if he sees them to be righteous, his sentence will follow his own knowledge. He will declare their righteousnesses to all the world.

This is the security of all good men, as it is the eternal terror and astonishment of all hypocrites and sinners, that they shall be brought before an unerring, uncorrupt Judge, who can neither be bribed nor deceived, and who cannot mistake them, or wrongfully condemn them, however they may mistake, or wrongfully condemn themselves. Thus then they are really safe in their own goodness, when they most of all suspect their own danger, and are secure from evil, even while they are afraid of falling under it.

But tho' every good man is in this safety, let his understanding of himself be what it will, yet if in any of those things which he takes to be a matter of life or death, he judges wrong of himself, and thinks erroneously, he can enjoy no peace and comfort. He will go to heaven full of fears and foreboding thoughts, and never think himself in the way to bliss, till he is actually introned in it: He will at last be happy, but he will have no sight or expectation of it in the way; for all his life long he will be tormented with doubts and suspicions, fears and jealousies, and be still, by turns, concluding himself lost as to the next world, tho' he be only lost in his own sickly imagination. And this fancied future misery will bring him under a real one for the present. It will make him have sad thoughts, and a sorrowful heart: It will much abate his joy, and disturb his peace, and almost overwhelm him in groundless perplexity and vexation.

But

But that pious souls may not fear where no fear is, nor torment themselves with unreasonable apprehensions, let us endeavour to remove their groundless scruples and mistakes, by shewing what, and of what force those things are, which are wont, without any sufficient reason, to disquiet the mind, and to disturb the peace of good and safe, ~~but~~ mistaken Christians, about it.

The causes of good mens fears are chiefly these:

They are wont to call in question their future salvation; because after all their care against them, they find that some motions of the flesh, some stirrings of their lusts, some thoughts of evil, do still arise in them. They feel themselves subject to delights and fancies, and desires of forbidden things: They are liable to a lustful thought, a covetous wish, and insurrection of anger, of envy, and of several other damning sins.

It is true indeed these lusts do not reign in them, because they do not consent to their instigations, nor do what they would have them. They can only inhabit and stir in them, but have not strength enough to give laws to them. For they repress them before they come to will and chuse, much less to fulfil and practise what they incline to. They may perhaps have a thought and fancy, a wish and inclination after unchaste pleasures; but they correct themselves there, and never in their hearts consent to an unlawful embrace, nor ever proceed to an unclean action. In a sudden motion of anger, it may be they may have several expressions of wrath, and instances of revenge occur to their thoughts, and obtruding themselves upon their imaginations; but they stop there, and do not consent to utter an injurious word, or to commit a spiteful action; and the same they experience by themselves in other instances. In all which, several forbidden things will get into their thoughts and desires, and steal from them a wish or inclination: But when once they have done that, they can do no more, being unable either to gain their consent,

sent, or to command their practice; so as that they should not only desire, but also chuse and fulfil them.

Now tho' they do not suffer sin to reign in them, so as to consent to it, or to fulfil its lusts; yet they fear lest their very thoughts and inclinations after it should prove damnable. For God requires the obedience of our whole man, of the mind and affections, as well as of our wills and actions; and he is disobeyed by any, as well as by all our faculties. And seeing every sin is forbidden under pain of death, who knows but that this admission of it into our thoughts and desires, is a mortal transgression? This is one great cause of fear, and a rock of offence to a truly honest and good man.

But to take off all doubt and scruple upon this account, we must know, that our impotent lusts and ineffective desires of evil things, if they are able to get no farther than a thought or wish, tho' at present they are a matter of exercise and humiliation, yet at the day of judgment they shall be no article of death or condemnation. For Christ's Gospel does not sentence us severely upon these first motions of a lust, or beginnings of a sin. If they arrive no higher than fancy or inclination, tho' the merits of Christ's sacrifice, there is grace enough in store for them; and in the gospel-account they are not grown up to be a matter of death, nor come within the confines of destruction.

We shall not at the last day be condemned for our feeble lusts and desires after evil, which are unconsented to, and unfulfilled: God will never sentence any man otherwise good, for every sudden desire and inclination after sinful things. If it resist there, and goes no farther than bare desire, he will pardon and pass it by.

These lustings and desires are to be considered, both as to their first birth, and as to their indulged and allowed continuance; the first is never damning, and the latter many times is no article of condemnation.

As for our bodily lusts and desires of evil in their first birth, no man, who is otherwise virtuous and obedient, shall ever be judged to die for them: If it were otherwise, who could possibly be saved? For as long as we live in this world, we have all of us these first motions of appetite after evil things, more or less; and there is no avoiding of it: For the laws of God, which are impositions superinduced upon our natures by their prohibitions, make several of our most natural appetites and desires themselves to be sinful; the lusts of the flesh making up a good part of the prohibitions of the gospel. But tho' God by his after-prohibition has made them sinful, yet from that natural necessity which he had laid upon us before, we cannot live entirely free from them. Our flesh will lust and make offers after such things as are naturally fitted to its liking, and we cannot help it; because our bodies, as long as they are conversant among the things of this world, from their natural frame and constitution will still be excited by some things to crave and desire, and provoked by others to hate and abhor them. This is natural; and while there is any life and sense in our bodies, the good and evil things of the world must of necessity thus sensibly affect them; and where they are affected with pleasure, there it is natural for them to desire; as where they feel pain, it is natural for them to abhor the thing which occasions and produces it.

Thus these first lustings and cravings after forbidden things are natural, and were made necessary before the prohibition came to make them sinful. And if by an after-law men shall be condemned for being sensibly affected with outward things, or for having a sudden lust and inclination after them upon their being so sensibly affected with them; they shall then be condemned for what they could not help, and die for not performing impossibilities.

But God neither can nor does make any laws which exact things so rigorous; he punishes nothing in us but
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what proceeded from our own will; nor exacts an account of us for our natural lusts and inclinations, further than, they are subject to our own choice and free disposal. If a sudden fear or unclean desire arise up in the heart of a holy man from the presence of outward objects or inward imaginations, and the natural temper of his blood and spirits, he shall not be put to answer for it, because he could not prevent it. He could no more hinder it than he can hinder the beating of his heart, or the motion of his blood; seeing it was no free-will of his, but a natural effect of his temper. And to be condemned for that, is to suffer for having flesh and blood, as well as reason and spirit, and to undergo punishment for being made up of body as well as soul; for being a man, and not an angel.

As for several things which follow upon the first suggestion of a prohibited object, and upon the first lusting after it; they are not the effects of nature, but of our choice. For tho' a first thought and fancy of evil, and a sudden lusting after it, may obtrude itself upon us before we can observe it, whether we will or not, either by chance or by occasion of a temptation; yet a continued entertainment of it, and a stay upon it in our imaginations, to cherish lust and inflame desire, cannot come upon us but by our own liking and connivance. For as soon as ever we can observe them, our thoughts are our own to dispose of, how and upon what we please. Wherefore, if we please, we may call them off from the forbidden objects. They started it without our leave, but they must have our leave to stay upon it.

However, these after-thoughts themselves, and these inclinations after forbidden things, which come thus from the free determination, or at least from the connivance of our own wills, are not always an article of our condemnation; but then only when we consent to do what

they suggest, or practise and fulfil the same. For if the forbidden thing is only fancied in our minds, and craved by our appetites, but has got no possession of our hearts, nor any endeavours of our lives and actions, according to the gracious terms of that gospel by which we must stand or fall, it is not yet come within the terrors of judgment, nor has made us liable to death and hell.

For the evil and danger of our bodily desires, is the evil and danger of a temptation; when our appetites desire what the prohibition has made evil, and our spirits on the other side declare what the commandment has made good, then is the time of temptation or trial, whether our wills are resolved to stick to our lusts, or to our duty; and whether they will prefer God or sin; and herein lies the great danger of our natural appetites; for tho' in themselves they are not mortal and damning to any man otherwise good, yet are they traps and snares to mortal and damning sins.

I have said our natural appetites are not mortal and damning to any men who are otherwise good and virtuous. The lusting and inclinations of our flesh after meats and drinks, and after ease and pleasure, and the lusting of the eye after gain and riches, are not absolutely and directly forbidden, nor in themselves, and before they have got any farther, an article of our condemnation. All the desires of the flesh are naturally necessary, some to preserve our own persons, and some to the preservation and propagation of mankind. This God himself has made, and he allows of it. It is a sin in no man to have a stomach to his meat, to have desire after ease, and a fleshly inclination after bodily pleasures; because God has so framed our bodies that they should, and therefore he cannot be angry with us, if we do desire them.

Indeed he has not left these desires to their own swing, but has put several restraints upon them. He has

has bound them up from some objects, and in some degrees. We are forbid to desire and lust after meat and drink, ease and pleasure, riches and plenty, when either we are injurious to other men, in procuring that which we lust after; or when we are excessive and intemperate in the use of it; or for its sake transgress any other commandment. Our desires for meat and drink, for instance, must not carry us on to excessive measures in gluttony and drunkenness; our carnal lusts must not draw us on to act them with undue objects, in fornication, adultery, rapes, or other prohibited uncleanness: And our desire of money must not betray us into thefts or robberies, fraud and circumvention, extortion and oppression, niggardliness, uncharitableness, or other sins, whether against justice or charity. As on the other side, our fears and averasions from wants or pains, or other bodily evils, must not induce us to neglect a commandment, that we may please our flesh, or to deny our religion for the securing of a bodily enjoyment.

These restraints God has laid upon our bodily appetites; having given us these commands, with several others, which we are often tempted to transgress, in order to the fulfilling of them. For our bodily appetites themselves do not distinguish either of objects or degrees. A man's palate or his stomach, when solicited by any delicious meat or drink, which yields a pleasure to it, does not tell him when it hath enough, nor ceases to desire before it comes to intemperance. Our eyes lust after money; but they consider not whose it is. If they may have it, they matter not to whom it belongs; or how they come by it. It is the same in our fleshly appetites of other things, the natural pleasure of which we lust after; and it is that which moves our bodies, and these lust after them, so long as they are pleased with them. They never stop at a fit measure, or turn away from a forbidden object. Those who are ruled by them, are carried on to any thing that agrees

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with them, whether it be lawful or unlawful, and are thus sure to be insnared into sin. Here God has set a restraint upon them, and will punish them severely if they go beyond it.

Then are our lusts mortal to us, they are then articles of our condemnation, when they have damning effects, and insnare us into mortal and damning sins. To any good man, the bare lusts and desires of evil are not so truly a damning sin, as a dangerous temptation. They are not in themselves an article of death to him, but they are apt to carry him on to that which is. For that which puts any sin into a capacity to tempt us, is our lust or desire of something which is annexed to it, and which we hope to obtain by it. There is always something that goes along with it, which is naturally fitted to please our flesh, and to excite a carnal appetite; and by this we are tempted and allured into the practice and commission of it. Bare sin could never tempt any man, nor could any one in his wits ever chuse to disobey for disobedience sake, without any thing further; because there is no good in transgression, nakedly considered, which could move any man's will to chuse and embrace it: But on the contrary much evil, that will dissuade and fright him from it: For it deprives us of God's favour, and subjects us to his vengeance, fills us with sad hearts, and anxious and terrible expectations. But that which wins us over to a liking and approbation of it, is the appearance of some pleasure, profit, honour, or other annexed allurements, which we expect to reap by it. It is one or other of these that overcomes all our fears, and inveigles us into the commission of it; for they strike in with our natural appetites, and raise in us desires after it; and these prove the baits which draw us in, and are the insnaring temptation. All the force of which lies in this; the satisfaction of a lust is joined with the acting of a sin, which is an invitation to us, for the

the sake of the one, to commit the other. The transgression has something annexed, which is agreeable to our fleshly natures, and raises in us desires of it, and cravings after it. And when it has got this hold of us, it draws us as much as we can be drawn by our love, or our own lusts, and the gratifications of our bodily appetites, which is indeed a great step to our choice and commission of it, and a strong temptation.

For this is the natural order of our actions; either our consciences or our passions move and excite us to them, and then our wills chuse and intend them, and upon that choice and intention, our understandings contrive and direct, and last of all our bodily and executive powers fulfil and perform them. All our bodily actions are at the choice, and under the command of our will; and all our choice is upon the appearance of some good or other, which either our consciences, or our fleshly lusts and appetites propose to us. Our wills we must remember are placed in a middle state, and are beset on both sides. Our lusts being urgent with us to one thing, and our consciences to another. And this is that strife between the flesh and the spirit which is mentioned in the scriptures, and that contention which St Paul describes between the law of lust in the members, and the law of God in the mind. These two principles, our body and spirit, or our lusts and our consciences, are those great interests that vie and struggle in us, and emulously contend which shall obtain the consent and choice of the will of man. And whenever either of them has got that, our actions follow in course. For our bodily members move at our own choice, and therefore if our lusts after the pleasure of sin, have once prevailed upon our wills to consent to it, they have gained their point, and we shall go on without more ado to act and commit it.

For this then lies all the force of a temptation, that the sin which we are tempted to, has something annexed to it, wherein our flesh is delighted, and which it lusts after and desires for the sake of that pleasure which it finds in it. And when by this means any sin has got our fleshly love and desire, it has got a powerful friend in our own bosoms. For our lusts are strong and violent, and where they set upon a thing, they will not easily be denied, but are urgent and importunate with our wills to consent to the gratification and fulfilling of them. If once any sin has struck in with them, it is able to try its strength, and contend with the law of God in the mind, being furnished now with a powerful bait, and a strong temptation.

Thus are our lusts and desires of forbidden things, not the forbidden sin itself, but the temptation to it. In the bare lusting or desiring of them, we do not commit the damning sins themselves, but are tempted only to the commission. And in this the apostle St. James is most express: For "then," says he, "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed to evil by them."

As for mere temptation to a damning sin, it is not mortal and damning. For our being tempted to sin, is not a renouncing of our Lord, but an exercise of our service and obedience to him, and a trial whether or no we will renounce him. It is the great proof and argument how dearly we love him, and how closely and faithfully our wills adhere to him. It shews how obedience is uppermost in our hearts, and that we will rather deny our dearest lusts and importunate desires, than venture for their sakes to offend him. Thus to be tempted is so far from being criminal, that it gives a plain proof how much we will lose and suffer rather than we will disobey. It is a trial of us how far we will prefer God and our duty before other things, even those that are most dear to us of all things in the world besides. We do not sin damnably then in being tempted,

tempted, so long as we consent not to it, but manfully resist and overcome the temptation.

And this is evident from hence, because those very men who had lived most free from sin, have not for all that lived free from temptation. Even Adam himself, before he knew what sin was, and during his state of innocence, was liable to be tempted. For the "tree of knowledge of good and evil," of which God had forbidden him to eat, was alluring to his eyes, and an incentive to his lust, as well as any other tree of the garden. And because it was so, the woman was won to eat of it, through the strength of such desire after it, notwithstanding God had commanded her to abstain from it. "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eye; and she took of the fruit thereof and did eat." And by the same inducement she drew in her husband, and "gave it unto him, and he did eat also." The second Adam, who was most intirely innocent, and guilty of no sort of sin, was yet liable to temptation, like as we are, "being in all points tempted, like as we are, yet without sin:" Nay, the Apostle says it was necessary he should be tempted, that by what he felt in himself, he might the better know how to shew mercy and have compassion upon us. "In all things," says he, "it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful" as well as a "faithful High-Priest; for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." "ed."

As for our being tempted then, or invited to any sin, by our bare lust and inclination after it, in itself, and before it has got any further, it is no mortal sin, or damning transgression. It is the scene of good endeavour, the trial of obedience, a test of our great love and preference of God and his law, before all the world besides, before even our own dearest lusts, and our ourselves: And therefore in itself, bare lust and

desire, or being tempted and invited to sin, cannot be damnably sinful.

As for our lusts and temptations, it is true they differ in degrees, according as our desires of that evil which we are tempted to, are indulged, and have advanced more or less. For sometimes a lust may stir, but as soon as it is observed, it is again extinguished. The pleasure of the sin, whether by being seen or fancied, raises in us a sudden thought or desire after it; but the lust is expelled, and the fancy is turned away from the evil thing as soon as it is discovered. It is not suffered to remain and dwell in us, but is presently thrown out with indignation. And this is a power over our own desires, and a way of breaking the strength of temptations; which is incident only to graver men, and to perfect Christians; and that not in all instances of temptations, but only in such as are not extraordinary in themselves, and which have been often vanquished and triumphed over. It is in such cases, where use has made the conquest easy, and long custom of ceasing and turning away from the inveigling desire, has so taken off all the difficulty, that we are able to silence and subdue the lust as soon as we discern it. And as for those feeble desires and impotent temptations, there is no question but a good Christian may be under them, and yet he is in no danger of being condemned for them.

At other times our lusts live longer, and advance higher. They grow up to high degrees, till they are able to contend and strive against the mind and conscience; insomuch that when at last they are denied, and our wills chuse to do what God commands us in spite of them, the conquest is not gained without much struggling and opposition. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, as well as the spirit lusteth against the flesh. And tho' at last the fleshly lusts are overpowered, and cannot prevail with our wills to chuse on their side, yet do they strive hard, and contend for it.

It. Here a lust is not presently subdued as soon as it is discerned, but it strives and struggles. It can shake head against the law in the mind, tho' it cannot overcome it: It has some interest in the will, tho' it has not a sufficient interest: For the will hearkens to it for some time, and considers of what it offers; notwithstanding that at last it rejects its suit, and thro' the solicitations of a more powerful favourite, resolves against it. This power our lusts have in us while we are young converts, and of a more imperfect goodness. In some very great temptations, such as are the fear of death, and bodily torments especially, they will struggle thus in those, who are the most perfect Christians of all.

But now when our lusts are in this degree, when they stay upon our souls for some time, and strive against our spirits for the consent of our wills, before they are finally denied it; yet if they go no further than bare lust, and our wills do not, after all their struggling, consent to them, or chuse the evil thing that is craved by them, they are still uncondemned, and incident to an heir of salvation. This, as I take it, is clear from what St. Paul himself says of the truly regenerate, or of those who in his words, "walk in the spirit." For in them he says plainly, that the "flesh lusteth against the spirit," tho' it is not able "to prevail over it." The "flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh."

Thus even in fulfilling the will of the spirit, you contradict another will of your lusts, and cannot do, or do not the things that you would.

Christ himself, who knew no sin, nor ever committed any thing which could in strict justice be worthy of death, was yet subject to such a conflict of flesh and spirit as this now mentioned. His very death and passion, which were the consummation and highest part of his obedience, were not without great struggling of his flesh, and a long and earnest conflict of his bodily de-

fires, against it. He was in a strange fear and discomposure about it. "He began," says St. Mark, "to be sore amazed." And when he had recovered himself a little from the maze of that sudden fright, he prays against it, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." His request not being granted at first, he makes a fresh address, wherein he is more importunate; "being in an agony," says St. Luke, "he prayed more earnestly;" his supplications he offered up with strong crying and tears. All this strife and opposition, and the desire of life, and the bodily appetite after ease and safety, together with the sense of God's wrath and high displeasure, rose in him against his obedience to his sufferings. But because all this was only carnal desire, which though it lasted some time, and discomposed him much, was not able to gain any thing of his will and consent to the refusal of his duty; therefore notwithstanding that, he was perfectly innocent. All that can be said is, he was tempted of his flesh against this great and last instance of his obedience, but he did not yield or consent to the temptation.

Thus then as for the lusts and desires of our flesh, whether they be suddenly rejected, and make no resistance, or are longer lived, and contend much; yet if they have got no consent of our wills to the fulfilling of them, nor any choice or performance of the evil thing or action which is craved by them (as those have not which are the complaint and fear of good men) they are only a temptation to a damning sin; but in themselves thus far they are not damning.

Having shewn for what lusts and desires of evil we shall at the last day be pardoned, we shall now shew for which of them we shall be condemned.

Our lusts are then damnable, and dangerously evil, when they are effectual instruments and temptations to damning evils, and carry us on either to chuse or practise them; for they are the great favourites and seducers

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seducers of our wills, and thereby the authors of our actions. They first bring us to chuse and consent to the deadly sin by which they are gratified, and then to act it; and when they are gone on to either of these, they are an article of condemnation. They are uncondemning till they come so far; but if once they have got us to consent to the alluring sin, from that consent begins their sting, and both it, and all that followed it, makes us liable to eternal destruction.

To clear this matter a little farther, I will here set down those several steps by which we ascend to the completion, and are carried on to the working and commission of any sin.

At the representation of the object which is to tempt us to it, whether it be an unchaste embrace, an unlawful gain, or the like, either by what we feel of it now, if it be before our senses, or by what we fancy of it, if in our imagination, our flesh is pleased and delighted with it. And from this pleasure it naturally goes on to love, and love ends in desire; but when once we are come to desire a thing, our passions have done their part, and all that in them lies towards the action.

When in the appetite or animal soul the sin has gone thus far, the next step is, that to gratify this desire, or lust of our flesh, our wills should consent to it. For our wills are the disposers of all that follows; and unless they consent to get that which the flesh so much desires, there can be nothing more done towards it. But if they do consent to the desire, and intend to fulfil it, then our understanding and contrivance are employed in deliberating and consulting, what time, what place, what means are fittest to accomplish it with the least difficulty, and the most delight, and to the greatest advantage. And when our minds have seen which to prefer and fix upon, then our wills resolve upon them, and make choice of them. When this is done, the last decree is past, and all the time of doubting and

and deliberation is over; nothing then remains, but to apply our bodily powers, to perform our resolutions in the execution and commission of that which was resolved upon.

This is the natural order of our faculties, and the process that is observed by our principles of action, toward their completion, and the final commission of any sin. The first beginning is in the lower soul, for that is the inlet of all sin, and the open door for temptation; and there it is that sin has all its strength and snaring powers; upon which account it is called by St. Paul, "a law in the members." And when these lusts of our flesh have won the consent of our wills, they are secure of all our after-contrivances for it, and of all our actual performance and execution. For both our thoughts and our bodily powers are at the command of our own wills. If at the instigation of our lusts, our wills have once consented to the sin, they will quickly set our heads at work to contrive for it, and our hands and other bodily powers to execute and fulfil it.

In this method our principles of action move, when we act with full deliberation; and when they are all employed, sometimes indeed there is no contrivance at all, because none is needful; as it happens when the opportunity of the sin is present with us, and just before us at such a time as we consent to it. Nothing more is then wanting, but only to act and fulfil it. When the opportunity is absent, and we are put to forecast and contrive for it, then is the process of our faculties in that order which we have here described.

For an instance and illustration of this, we will take the sin of drunkenness, and the process will appear to be as has been mentioned. In a man whose inclination that way disposes him to be tempted by it, the fancy of it in himself, or the having it suggested to him by another, gives him a thought of the pleasure which accompanies it, and from that apprehension of its pleasureableness, he begins

begins to love, and from that love he goes on straight-way to desire it. His will being now solicited by his lust or bodily desire, consents to the fulfilling of it. And this consent being once gained, the next thing in order is, to deliberate and contrive what company, what time, and what place are fittest for it. And when by comparing all things together, he comes to make a judgment of that, he immediately chooses, and resolves upon it; and that being done, there is nothing remaining further but to execute what he has resolved, and go on to the performance of it.

Now so long as the evil is contained in a short-delightful thought, or love, or desire, and rests there, but goes no farther; it is not so much our damning sin, as our dangerous temptation. It will be connived at, and at the last day we shall not be condemned for it. Thus far the sin is only soliciting our choice, but has not got it; and as yet we have not committed a mortal crime, but are only under a trial, whether we will be drawn to the commission of it or no. If once our wills consent to it, then begins the sting, and there the danger enters; for the lusting after evil, so far as to consent to it, and much more so as to contrive for it, or to fulfil it, makes us liable to death and eternal damnation. If by means of the tempting lust any sin has prevailed so far, it is become a mortal offence, and subjects us to destruction. "Lust," says St. James, "when it is conceived," or is imperfectly consented to, answering its conception, which is an imperfect formation, "bringeth forth sin;" and "sin, when" (by being perfectly consented to) "it is finished, bringeth forth death," which is the wages of it.

And that our lusts after any sin are then damnably sinful, when they are gone beyond desire, and are come either to our consent or contrivance, or actual performance, appears further from these instances in them all three.

If we lust so long after any evil thing as to consent to the sinful enjoyment of it, we are guilty of all that punishment which is threatened to it. "He that looks upon a woman," says our Saviour, so long as to "lust after her," or to consent in his heart to the enjoyment of her, "he hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." If we lust so long as to contrive for it, which is a degree further, we are the more guilty of the sin, and more liable to the punishment of it still. The machinations and contrivances of murder are reckoned among those things which pollute a man, and thereby unfit him for entering into heaven, where nothing can ever have admittance that is unclean, as well as murder itself is.

But if our lust after any sinful enjoyment carry us on, not only to consent to it, or to contrive for it; but, what is the perfection of all, to work and fulfil it; then has it ensnared us into as much mischief as it can, and is become dangerous and damning with a witness. For then it has prevailed with us to complete our sin, and give the last hand to it. It has brought us under that which is most of all threatened, for we now "fulfil the lusts of the flesh," and work iniquity.

If we continue to do this, not only for once or twice, but in constant returns and in a fixed course and tenure of action; then as our sin is grown higher, the acts of it being more numerous, and the guilt more crying, so will our punishment also be the more dreadfully severe. This is called walking after the flesh, and "living after the flesh." It is a state of wasted virtue, and habitual reigning sin; it is not only through its obnoxiousness to punishment a state of death, but also through its hardness of cure and difficult recovery, a state of great doubt and danger. The same "law in the members" which wars against the "law of the mind," so as thus to captivate and triumph over it, as it is the law of sin, so, as the Apostle says, it is the "law of death" too.

Therefore

Therefore all our lustings after evil, when once they come to be consented to, though before they were connived at, are thenceforth deadly and damning. And whoever hopes to be saved at the last day from the punishment of them, must thus far mortify and kill them; "mortify those desires," says St. Paul, "which are seated in your earthly members;" all fleshly lusts must of necessity be crucified in every good Christian; for no man will be reputed to belong to Christ till this change is wrought in him: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." We must not so mortify and crucify them, as to have no flesh'y appetites and bodily desires of evil; for then must we have no desires at all, because our senses, as has been observed, do not distinguish between lawful or unlawful, but are naturally moved by an agreeable object, whether it be with God or against him; but we must mortify them to that degree, as that they may never be able to win us over to consent to any forbidden thing for their gratification. They must never have so much interest in our hearts, as to make us prefer them before our duty; and chuse to perform what they, rather than what God requires. Some stirrings and ineffective motions of them, which cannot prevail against God, nor gain over the consent of our wills to any thing that he has forbidden, are dispensed with. They are the stage of temptation, but not of death; for God bears with them, and the mortified men themselves do daily feel and labour under them. But it is the prevailing strength of our lusts after evil things, when they get our consent to them, and carry us to transgress God's laws to fulfil them, is that which is to be mortified in every good man, because under its empire he cannot go to heaven.

Before a man can become a good Christian, he has so killed the reigning power of lust, as not to be acted any longer by its instigation. He feels some small stirrings of it afterward, but they do not win upon him, nor prevail over him: For he is always ready to deny the
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satisfaction of his lust, before he will displease his God, and makes all the desires of his flesh give way to the dictates of his conscience: "Ye that are Christ's," says St. Paul, "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

When once this is done, there is no great trouble in it afterwards; for the more a man is accustomed to obey, the less difficulty does he find in mortification and self-denial, and in restraining of all those lusts which tempt to disobedience. He is not now in every temptation put to the pain and trouble of "cutting off a right hand," or of "plucking out a right eye." It is true this self-denial and mortification went very near him at first; but since he has been used to it, and his flesh is accustomed to bear the yoke, there are no such pangs and uneasiness attending it. His lusts are so mortified, as it is absolutely necessary they should be: They are crucified to that degree, as to be disabled from gaining his consent to them, his contrivance for them, or his performance of them. Which is as much mortification as God will exact of him.

But yet when this is done, and our lusts are mortified to this degree, there is still need of a watchful care of them, and a continual strife against them, lest they rebel again and go further. For the objects of sense, and the allurements of the flesh, are still before us, and our bodies naturally are still as capable to be delighted in them, and to lust and long after them, as ever they were before. It is only the overpowering strength of the law in the mind or conscience, which maintains the resolution of our wills against them, and by that means keeps them under. Wherefore if once we begin to slacken our care, and to allow them to go where and how far they please, they will quickly grow upon us, and prove too hard for us; bring us first to consent to them, and after that to complete and fulfil them.

Let no man therefore indulge to the thoughts of unlawful pleasures, and by the delights of his fancy foment

foment and cherish the desires of his flesh, presuming that all is safe, while he does not consent to them, nor yields to fulfil them. For admitting that all things else are innocent and uncondemning, yet however by this means he lays a snare for his own soul. He throws himself into temptation, and so cannot expect that God should deliver him out of it. God has promised to relieve us indeed in all our necessities of his own making: and if his providence throws us upon this trial, his grace shall support us under it, and make way for our escape out of it. "He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear," says the apostle; but together with the temptation he "will make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear" so much of it as befalls you. But what is this to us, if we bring ourselves into snares, and prove our own tempters? For there is no reason at all to presume that God, if he will deliver us from other enemies, should deliver us also from our own selves; and that he should secure us by his spirit from those very snares which we lay for our own virtue. If we will entertain serpents in our bosoms, he has no where engaged, nor is there any reason why he should, that we shall not be stung by them. On the contrary he warns us against them, and bids us be careful to keep off from them. So far must we be from bringing temptations upon ourselves, that, if we will observe his orders, we must pray daily even against those to which his providence may expose us. This being one of those petitions, which, according to our Lord's appointment, we are to put up to God, as often as we do that for our "daily bread, that he would not lead us into temptation."

If therefore by indulging to delightful fancies, and growing lusts of evil, we throw ourselves into a great temptation, we have just reason to fear, lest God for our punishment should leave us in it, and suffer us to fall by it into perdition; such indulgence is apt of itself to inflame our lusts, and to weaken our resolutions.

God

God also is prone to withdraw his grace, and to leave us to our own strength upon it; and since at the same time it increases our necessities, and withdraws our aids, it must needs puts us into a dangerous condition. To secure our souls then, and keep us off from damning sins, we must resist temptations at the beginning, and not give way to them; we must not cherish, and indulge, but timely check, and heedfully suppress them.

Thus at last we see, what is the just force of this first cause of fear to honest minds, their ineffective lusts and impotent desires of evil. The first beginnings of lust cannot be avoided, and the longer entertainment of it shall not finally be punished, if it is soon checked by us; nay, if it stays longer, and contends much with us, to long as it does not prevail upon us to consent to, and fulfil the sin to which it is a temptation. But when once it has gained our consent and choice of that sin to which it would engage us, then it is of a damning strain, and all its following effects are mortal.

Tho' therefore those lustings and desires which good men complain of, may justly be an employment of their watchfulness and care, yet ought they not to be a cause of their fear and scruple; for they shall not bring upon them those evils they are afraid of, nor ever prove their ruin and destruction. The evil thing is entertained only in a thought, or a wish. They lust after it, and are tempted by it; but that is all, for they do not consent to the temptation. And since their lusts go no farther, they shall not harm them when Christ comes to judgment, nor ever bring them into condemnation.

Another thing which disquiets the minds of good and honest men, and makes them needlessly to call in question the saveableness of their present state, is the coldness and unaffectedness, the unsettledness and distractions which they find in themselves when they are at prayers; and good people are wont to cry out of desertions, to
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think that God has thrown them off, and that his Spirit has forsaken them, if at any time they find a great distraction and dulness of spirit in their devotions, with a great abatement of that zeal and fervency, that fixedness and attention which they have happily enjoyed at other times.

But this is a great mistake, arising from mens ignorance of God's laws, and of their own selves. God has no where told them, that he will judge them at the last day by the steadiness and fixedness, the tide and fervency of their devotions, but the integrity of their hearts, and the uprightness of their obedience. The last sentence shall not pass upon men according to the heat of their affections, but according to the goodness of their lives. If they have been careful to practise all God's commandments according to their power and opportunities, and this of prayer among the rest, in such sort as their unavoidable infirmities would suffer them, they shall be safe in that judgment, notwithstanding any inequality in their bodily tempers, or unconitancy and abatement in their bodily affections.

In the duty of prayer, as in all other duties, we are bound to far only as comes under the power and choice of our own wills. And after all our care and pains in fixing our thoughts, and raising of our desires in prayer, through some bodily indisposition or unforeseen accidents, which we cannot help; our minds sometimes will still run astray, and our desires be cold and languid. And thus this unwilling dulness and distraction shall not influence our main state, more than our other unwilling failures do; it is a thing which no man can help, or is perfectly free from: Wherefore God will not be severe upon, but in great mercy he will pity and connive at it.

For as for the attention of our minds, and the fixedness of our thoughts, either in prayer or in any other business; it is a thing which is not always in our own power,

power, but may be hindered and interrupted by many accident, whether we will or no. Any thing that makes our bodily spirits tumultuary and restless, disturbs and breaks our attention. Any high motion of our blood, or any former impression upon our spirits, either by our precedent studies, or our crowd of business, will make great variety of thoughts and roving fancies, to obtrude themselves upon us; and this is our natural frame and constitution, which we must submit to, and can have no wholly remedy. We can no more prevent it than we can prevent our dreams, when our fancies are lively by like impressions. For from the natural union of our souls and bodies, our minds in the most spiritual operations of thinking and understanding, go along with our bodily spirit, and apprehend often their impressions, and we can as well refuse to see when our eyes are open, or to taste what is put into our mouth, as we can refuse to have a thought of those things which are imprinted upon our bodily fancy. The connexion between these is necessary and natural, and there is no breaking or avoiding it. Thus let us be either at our prayers, or at any other exercise; if any temper of our bodies, any accidental motion of our blood, any former impression of foregoing studies, or other business stir in our fancies, our thoughts must needs be diverted, and our attention disturbed by them.

We are more apt to find it thus in our prayers, than in an other thing. For besides that, in these the adversary is more busy with us; men therein often use violence, and screw up the fixedness of their minds, and the fervency of their hearts, to the highest pitch. And thus their bodily spirits being constrained, are liable not only to be discomposed by outward accidents, but also to give back and fall of themselves; and when in this manner they withdraw, there is room made, till they can be recollected again, for other thoughts to arise instead of them.

Indeed

Indeed we may, and ought to strive against these distractions as much as we can, and to compose our thoughts as much as our natural temper, or our present circumstances will suffer us. When they wander in our prayers, as soon as we discern it, we may recollect them; and when our thoughts intrude, as soon as they are observed we may reject them. But then is all that we can do, or that God requires we should do; for we cannot pray perfectly and continually without them.

As for the zeal and fervency of our affections, whether in our prayers, or any thing else, they are various and very changeable, and do not depend so much upon the choice of our wills, as upon the temper of our bodies. Some upon every occasion are more warm and eager in their passions, either of love or hatred, hope or fear, joy or sorrow, than other men either are or can be. For there is a difference in tempers, as well as in exultations, and mens passions do no more issue out upon the same things, in the same eagerness, than their stomachs do after the same food with the same degrees of appetite: wherefore, every man cannot work himself up to a great fervency, and vehement affection; because all tempers do not admit of it. It is more a man's temper than his choice; and it is not to be expected, that all people should be able to raise themselves up to a transporting pitch therein, but only that they should who are born to it.

They whose natural temper fits them for a great fervency and a high affection, are not able to work themselves up to it at all times: for no man's temper is constant and unchangeable. Our bodies are subject to a thousand alterations, either from things within us, or from others that are without us. If a man's blood is put into an irregular ferment, either by a cold air or inward distemper, or any discomposing accident; it spoils not only the fix'dness of his thoughts, but also the zeal of his actions; and if there be any damp or disorder, any dulness or
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indisposition, either upon a man's blood or spirits, the discomposure of his body is presently felt in his soul. His thoughts flag, and his passions run low, all his powers are under a cloud, and suffer an abatement.

This every man finds in himself when he labours under a sickly and crazy temper, an aking or a cloudy head, or any other bodily indisposition; for our passions are bodily levers, and are managed by bodily instruments; they live and die with them, and are subject to all their coolings and their changes. Wherefore, as long as our bodily dispositions vary, and by reason of a number of accidents are still changeable and inconstant, the zeal and fervency of our affections must needs be so too, which sure we cannot help. God will not be always angry, or eternally torment us for them. His love and favour to us will not alter, as our unsettled thoughts or bodily tempers do.

We ought, according to our present circumstances and dispositions, to be as fervent and affectionate in prayer as we can, to recal our thoughts when we observe them to wander. If we do this, we need not doubt but our involuntary distractions shall not hinder our devotions being accepted by God, and the blessings which we sue for being obtained. If our prayers are sometimes less intent and less affectionate than at others they are, and we at all times greatly desire they might be, yet shall they be heard by our Father who is in heaven: For our fixedness and fervency, though they are great good things, and such as we must take care still to be provided with when we pray; yet are not the only qualifications of our prayers which prevail with God and move him to hear them. Our holy love and humble fear, our trust and dependence, submission and resignation, and other spiritual virtues and instances of obedience, are also dispositions which God respects in them; nay, which he prizes above all and principally looks at. Therefore as long as our hearts are honest, and our lives
entirely

entirely obedient, we are always furnished with those qualifications which are sufficient to bring down God's grace and blessing upon us, and which are the principal things that make our prayers themselves an acceptable offering. And if at any time a good man's devotions are less perfect than he desires they should be, that defect will be otherwise supplied, and he will have all that mercy conveyed to him through other means which his prayers should have obtained for him; for that which makes his prayers procure God's love and mercy for him, will make his obedience procure the very same.

Let a man make sure in the first place of a good life, and of an honest and entire obedience; and then he need not fear to want those things which all good men have need to pray for. He cannot perish for want of those mercies for which he prays, though it be sometimes (and will be, do what we can) with coldness and distraction; because not only the other obedient performance of his prayers, however through some unchosen hindrances a due fixedness and fervency are wanting, but also the constant uninterrupted obedience of his life is daily ascending up, and brings them down upon him.

Let no good soul then be further troubled and disquieted on this account, as if, because after all his care, his prayers are sometimes dull and cold, and his thoughts therein much distracted, he shall be eternally punished for them, or at least go without the blessings he desires in them. For as long as the spirit of obedience appears, both in his prayers and in his actions, the unwilling distractions of the mind, and the dulness and frozenness of his affections at some times, shall be no hindrance either to his suit at present, or to his happiness hereafter; his request shall not be thrown by, nor be condemned for them; but so far as God sees it fitting for him, it shall be granted, and he shall notwithstanding be eternally saved.

A third scruple which is wont causelessly to disgust and trouble honest minds, is the words of our Saviour, "I say unto you, that" as concerning "every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof at the day of judgment."

This seems to be a strict and severe saying; for in all the crowd and variety of converse, in the infinite numbers of questions and answers, and other occasions of discourse, what man in all the world, but especially those who are of a conversation that is free and open, courteous and ingenuous, chearful and delightful, which temper the gospel does not only allow, but approve of; Who, I say, of all men, but of men of this make especially, among all the occasions of speech, can avoid a multitude of words? And where much is said, how can it be but that much must be idle and impertinent?

This sometimes works very melancholy effects; for it frights men from all the innocent freedoms of converse, and the chearful entertainments of company. It makes them to appear stayed and reserved, silent and morose, to contribute nothing to the harmless mirth and chearfulness of conversation themselves, and to frown upon it in others. For all converse and society are managed by the tongue, and the ordinary entertainment of company is talking and discourse; but where men think every idle and useless word so dangerous a sin, they are afraid to speak. All that comes from them is steady and deliberate, grave and composed; they neither dare use any freedom themselves, nor can, without offence, observe it to be used by others.

But this is so far from being enjoined by Christ, that it is discountenanced by nature. It is so far from being a piece of religion, and a holy duty, that it is rather a piece of immorality and ill manners. And as it is discountenanced by nature, so it is also by the laws of Christ. For whatever some men may think of it, or how innocently soever they may be led into that conceit

ceit about it, yet is it a temper which Christ never intended to plant among us. His coming into the world was after another way, in a free use of the innocent allowances and liberties of mankind. "The Son of Man," says St. Matthew, "came eating and drinking," not in the singular austerities of John the Baptist, but in a "free way of conversation," such as others used. His religion enjoins the virtues of candour and benignity, affability and courtesy, an open freedom and alacrity, and all those other ways by which our conversation may be rendered innocently agreeable, and by which we may in any wise benefit, whether by profiting or pleasing one another. "Whatsoever things," says St. Paul, "are lovely," or grateful to men, "think "on these things." Love is the epitome of our whole duty, and all the sweetnesses and endearments of society that can be, so long as they are lawful and honest, are not only consistent with it, but parts and expressions of it.

As for the grave entertainments of discourse and religious conference, they, without doubt, have a great use, and in their place may deserve a great commendation. For good Christians may be much bettered and improved by having their graces awakened, their pious affections inflamed, their holy purposes fixed and settled, their endeavours directed and encouraged, and every thing that is good in them quickened and confirmed by religious conversation. But then it is to be considered, that even good things themselves must be taken in their own season, and must not be suffered to engross all time, a great part of which is to be spent upon other things. For we have not only one thing to do, but at several times several things call for us. "There is a time," says the wise man, "to every thing, and a season to every purpose "under heaven. There is a time to weep, and a time "to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." There is a time for diversion, as well as a time for business; a time wherein to have a more liberal and free discourse, as well as a time for grave and godly

conference. Farther, the innocent delights of conversation, and pleasurable entertainments of discourse, are themselves a great field of virtue, and an exercise, and occasion of many instances of obedience. For in that we may every one of us exercise in our own persons, and be examples to others of, much courtesy and kindness, civility and condescension, affability and obligingness.

Let no man think then, that his hours of common conversation are always lost hours; and that whatever time he spends upon offices of civility, and freedom of company, is misplaced and stolen from God and religion: For we are fulfilling God's laws, while, as occasion requires, we keep all these commandments in the pleasurable entertainments of common life. They are such business as he has set for us, and our obedient performance of them must pass for his service, as well as devotion, holy conference, and meditation.

It is no prejudice or hindrance to religion therefore, to be free and open in conversation, and pleasant and chearful in common life, but rather an instance and expression of it. It is no part of any man's duty to be talking always in scripture-phrase and sanctified expression, or else to be wholly silent, and severely morose, and not to talk at all. For an innocent chearfulness and freedom of discourse, is not the good man's sin, but the exercise of his virtue and obedience.

But as for that opinion, that every idle and impertinent word shall be severely accounted for at the day of judgment, which is the great sourer of conversation, and the occasion of this conceit, it is a great mistake: For it is not every idle and unprofitable, but every false, slanderous, or otherwise sinful and unlawful word, of which our Saviour speaks. As for the word which is translated idle, it may signify false and deceitful, as those words are which belye our works, when our actions do not answer them. And this is agreeable to the use
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of the word vain, which sometimes signifies the same as false and lying. It is used in the latter sense in the third commandment, where we are bid not to take the name of God in vain; that is, in perjury and falshood. For this is the sense our Saviour gives it in his repetition of the commandment; "It hath been said to them of old," saith he, i. e. in the third commandment, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, or swear falsely."

BUT if nothing more than useless and unprofitable were noted by the word itself, which we translate idle; yet it is no unusual thing in the scriptures, by several words to mean and intend more than in their literal sense they do express. Thus are the abominable works of darkness called unfruitful works, where the meaning surely is, not only that they bring in no profit or advantage, but also that they are most deadly and mischievous; and the "unfaithful wicked servant," spoken of by St. Matthew, is called the "unprofitable servant." After the same use of speech, our words, which do not only tend to none, but to very ill fruit, may be called idle or unprofitable words; and so they are in this place. For the idle words of which our Saviour speaks, are such words as are not only idle and unprofitable, but positively wicked and evil, being indeed false, slanderous, and reviling words; such as are a sign not only of a trifling, but of an evil heart. "How can ye," says Christ, "being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Thus "as a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth," or speaketh "good things, an evil man likewise out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things." And being the fruits of an evil heart, they are the sign not of an impertinent, but of an evil man. The "tree is corrupt, if the fruit be corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit." And since they are such words as are thus sinful in themselves, and an argument of so much sin in us, in the last judgment they

shall be charged upon us to condemn us. "For by thy words," says our Saviour, as well as actions, "shalt thou be justified;" and "by thy words," if they be such idle words as I mean, "shalt thou be condemned." Words of this black die, and of these mischievous effects, are not every idle and impertinent, but false, slanderous, railing, or otherwise sinful and forbidden words. But false and slanderous words are especially struck at in this place; such as were those lying and contumelious ones that occasioned all this discourse, when the Jews most reproachfully charged Christ's miracles upon the devil; telling him, "he cast out devils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils." Upon occasion of which black calumny, he warns them against such blasphemous speeches; demonstrating clearly the unreasonableness of them, the sinfulness of them, and the mischievous effects of them. Such reproachful words as these, let me tell you, says he, you shall be called to an account for, as well as for your works and actions. "I say unto you," that "every idle," or slanderous and reproachful word (such as now you have spoken against me) "that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment." For when that day comes, think you of it as you please, all men's words, as well as their actions, shall be called to an account: "By thy words thou shalt be justified;" and (if they have been such as yours now are) "by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Another causeless ground of fear which disquiets the minds, and affrights the hearts of good christian people, is the sin against the Holy Ghost; they hear very dreadful things spoken of it: For our Saviour Christ, who knew it best, and who at the last day is to judge of it, has told us plainly beforehand, that "he who blasphemeth the Holy Ghost, shall never be forgiven; neither in this world, nor in the world to come." In St. Mark it is, "he shall never have forgiveness, but is liable to eternal damnation." This is a fearful sentence upon a desperate

perate sin; and seeing they are in darkness about, they know not but what they themselves may be guilty of it; nay, some of a timorous temper and weak spirit go farther, and think they really are.

But to cure their fears, and quiet their minds in this matter, there needs nothing more be done, than to give them right apprehensions and a clear explication of this sin. For if they once know what it is, they would be at ease from such tormenting suspicions and unreasonable fears about it.

To explain this, I will consider what is meant in scripture by the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit. And according to an unusual metonymy of the giver for the gift, or of the cause for the effect, by the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost, is very often meant "the gift or effects of the Holy Spirit;" whether they be such as he ordinarily produces in us, or such as are extraordinary and miraculous.

Sometimes it signifies such gifts and dispositions, whether of mind or temper, as the Holy Ghost or Spirit of God is wont ordinarily to produce in men. It notes the good qualifications of our minds or understandings, which, as well as all other good gifts, are wrought in us by the Spirit, and derived to us from God. Thus a man endued with wisdom and discretion, such as Joseph advised Pharaoh to "set over all the land of Egypt," is called a man "in whom the Spirit of God is." And "the Spirit of the Lord," mentioned in Isaiah, chap. 11. is in the very next words, explained by the "spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of knowledge, and the spirit of quick understanding." It signifies also the virtuous tempers and good qualifications of our hearts, which, like as the former were, are given us of God: Thus that good and charitable temper, which is so exemplary in God, and which is wrought in our souls by him, is called the Spirit of God. "If we love one another, God dwells in us." Again, "Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us" that loving tem-

per of "his Spirit;" the temper which was so observable in Christ, is called the "Spirit of Christ;" the temper of Elias, is called the "Spirit of Elias;" the Spirit of the Lord is explained by the "Spirit of the fear of the Lord;" and that "Spirit which God hath given us," says St. Paul, "is not the Spirit of fear, but the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind." Thus does the Spirit of God signify many times in scripture those ordinary gifts and graces which are the good effects of the Spirit.

But besides these effects of it in the good endowments and perfections of our natural faculties, whether of mind or temper, which are common and ordinary; it sometimes signifies more especially those gifts which are extraordinary and miraculous. Of which sort are the gifts of tongues, of prophesy, of healing diseases without natural means, and performing other miraculous operations, so famous in the first times of the gospel. Thus for example, that saying, "I will pour out in those days of my Spirit," is interpreted by this in the next words, "And they shall prophesy." And the double share of the prophetick power of Elias, is called a double portion of his Spirit. And the Corinthians zealous pursuit of the miraculous and extraordinary gifts of prophesy, speaking with tongues, healing diseases, and working miracles, is called by the Apostle, their being zealous of Spirits; or of spiritual gifts.

Now as for these extraordinary gifts, they are all wrought in us by the same cause, and proceed from the same principle, the Holy Spirit of God, or the Holy Ghost. There are in the church, now in our times, says the Apostle, "Diversities of gifts, but yet one and the same Spirit is the giver of them all. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom," or of gospel-truths and revelation; "to another the word of knowledge," or prophetic predictions, and discerning of remote things, "by the same Spirit." To another miraculous "gifts of healing diseases," without use of means, "by the same Spirit." To another "the working

“working of miracles,” or the utmost activity and energy of powers in the highest instances and effects of them; of which sort are raising the dead, casting out devils, inflicting bodily torments on contumacious sinners, &c. And “to another prophesy or exposition of “scripture,” and inspired hymns. “To another discerning of Spirits,” both in seeing into mens spiritual thoughts and intentions; and also in discerning who wrought true miracles, and who satanical delusions, who were divinely inspired, and who were mere pretenders. “To another, the” ecstasick “gift of speaking “divers kinds of tongues.” in such rapturous transports, as permitted them not to stay to interpret what they said, and made them afterwards forget it. “To another, the “gift of interpreting those strange tongues” into the vulgar language of any of the congregation. But all these “diversities of gifts worketh that one and the “self-same Spirit,” dividing all these different gifts “to every man severally as he will.”

And seeing it is the same Spirit or Holy Ghost which is the author and giver of them all, therefore are they all indifferently called by either name; for sometimes all these extraordinary gifts, both the power of miracles and the gift of tongues and prophesy, are called “the “Spirit.” Thus when the Apostles began to “speak “with tongues, and to prophesy,” as well as to “work “miracles, and heal diseases,” it is said, that “the Spirit “was poured out upon them.” And all those varieties of gifts of one sort or other, which are reckoned up by St. Paul in the 12th chapter to the Corinthians, are attributed to the Spirit, and said to be wrought by it. The Apostles being fill’d with the Holy Ghost and speaking with tongues, is called their “speaking by the Spirit. They were all fill’d “with the Holy Ghost,” says St. Luke, “and began to speak “as the Spirit gave them utterance.” At other times, all the same powers, whether of understanding or action, of tongues or miracles, are called the Holy Ghost. Thus the gifts of signs and wonders and divers miracles, are

reckoned among the gifts of the Holy Ghost. "God," says St. Paul, "bearing the Apostles witness with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and other gifts of the Holy Ghost." And the signs and wonders which were done by the "hands of the Apostles," particularly that of "healing the lame man," so much taken notice of, is said to be the "witness of the Holy Ghost."

Thus by reason that all these extraordinary gifts, whether relating to our minds in knowledge and speaking with tongues, or to our executive power in healing diseases and working miracles, proceeded all from the self-same Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit; the gifts of either sort are called indifferently by either name, sometimes the Spirit, and sometimes the Holy Ghost.

But though for this reason the words Spirit and Holy Ghost are sometimes used promiscuously, to signify all or any of these extraordinary gifts indifferently, yet (which is very material to our purpose) sometimes, nay very frequently, they are distinguished. And then by the Holy Ghost is meant not all extraordinary gifts indifferently, but particularly those which respect our understandings, not executive powers, consisting rather in illumination than in power and action; of which sort are the gift of tongues, of prophecy, of discerning spirits, of knowledge, of revelation, and such like: Thus the lying against that part of the gift of discerning spirits is called "Lying to the Holy Ghost:" For St. Peter, who was endowed with this gift, tells Ananias when he would have imposed upon him, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lye to the Holy Ghost?" And St. Stephen being called with an extraordinary revelation of Christ's sitting at God's right hand in heaven, is called his "being filled with the Holy Ghost;" but more especially the gift of tongues and of prophecy are dignified with that name. When the Gentiles, in Cornelius's house, began to speak with tongues, upon St. Peter's preaching, it is said, that "the Holy Ghost fell on all them" "that

“that heard the word,” and that “on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

The disciples at Ephesus, who being baptized into the baptism of John, cannot be supposed ignorant of the many miraculous cures so much talked of among the Jews, and of the strange effects of the Spirit in Jesus, whom John preached, did yet tell Paul that “they had not so much as heard of the Holy Ghost,” which might very well be, because the Holy Ghost or gifts of tongues and prophecy were not given till after Jesus was glorified, but upon the preaching of St. Paul they were made partakers of it; “for when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied.”

Thus is the Holy Ghost sometimes put to denote, not all the miraculous and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit promiscuously, but particularly those which respect the mind or understanding, such as the gift of tongues, of prophecy, of deep knowledge, and the like.

The word Spirit is sometimes put to express not all extraordinary gifts and effects of the Spirit in general, but those by name which respect our executive, not knowing powers, and which consist not in illumination, but in action; of which some are the gifts of “healing diseases,” of “casting out devils,” of “raising the dead,” and other miraculous operations. Thus the miraculous courage and valour which was given to Othniel, is called “the Spirit of the Lord,” as is that likewise which was given to Gideon; and the miraculous strength of Samson is called the “Spirit of the Lord upon Samson;” and upon Christ’s working the miraculous cure on the man with the withered hand, St. Matthew applies to him the saying of the prophet, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.” Christ himself attributes his “casting out devils” to the “Spirit of God: I,” says he, “by the Spirit of God; cast out devils.”

As by the Holy Ghost therefore are meant particularly, the gifts of illumination in tongues and prophecy; so by

the Spirit are signified the gifts of power in healing diseases, casting out devils, and doing mighty and miraculous works.

Both these together take up the full compass of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and are both distinctly expressed by St. Peter, when he said that *Jesus* was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. These then are the several meanings of the words Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit; they denote, as the third person in the Trinity, the Holy Ghost himself; so also the effects which proceed from him. And thus having shewn what is meant by the words, we are in the next place to shew,

What is meant by sinning against the Holy Ghost, and which of all those sins that are committed against it is the unpardonable sin.

The only way by which men are capable of sinning against God, is by affront and dishonour. God is out of our reach for any other sort of injury, and we cannot otherwise hurt him than by shewing our contempt and disrespect of him.

Now in regard that the Holy Ghost, as our church teaches us, is very and essential God, this must needs be the only way by which we can sin against him also: We cannot injure him in his nature, but only in his honour; but then we sin against him when we walk cross to him and oppose him, or any way slight and contemn, undervalue or reproach him, or any of those excellent and divine gifts which proceed from him.

We do this more or less in every sin. For this Spirit of God is an universal instrument of faith and good life. It has taken the utmost care by miracles, and other its convictive evidences, to evince the truth of Christ's doctrine; and does now still, by his daily suggestions and solicitations, excite men to the observance of it. The Spirit of God has shewn itself so much concerned for our faith and obedience, that every act of unbelief and disobedience is a direct opposition to it, and reproach of it, and therefore is a sin against it.

But

But every sin is not the unpardonable fault here mentioned: For our wilful sins themselves are not desperate under Christ's religion: The gospel is a covenant that does not damn men upon all voluntary sin, but encourages their repentance with the promise of pardon. Thus, tho' all our sins are against God and his Spirit, they are not irremissible; but will be forgiven to every man who repents of them.

The unpardonable sin is a sin by itself. It hath something peculiar in it from all other sins, which by shutting us out from all possibility of repentance, excludes us from all hopes of being forgiven.

This sin is taken to be plainly this; "A sinning against the Holy Ghost, by railing and blaspheming the power of miracles, the gift of tongues, and other illuminations of the Holy Spirit which came down upon the Apostles at Pentecost." This and none other is taken to be the sin here mentioned. For the clearer discerning of which we will consider the sins against the Holy Ghost in all acceptations; and in all of them, except the last, we shall find room for pardon and remission.

To sin against the Holy Ghost, as it signifies the ordinary endowments and virtuous tempers of our minds and wills, is not the unpardonable sin here spoken of; for every sin against any particular virtue, is a sin against the Holy Ghost, in that sense; every act of drunkenness, for instance, is against the gift of sobriety; and every act of uncleanness is against the gift of continence; and so it is in the several actions of all other sorts of sin. But now as for all these, the great offer and invitation of the gospel is, that men would accept of mercy on repentance. The incestuous Corinthian sinned deeply against the grace of chastity, and he repented and was forgiven; St. Peter denied his Lord, and upon his repentance he was also pardoned; and the same grace has been allowed to all other wilful sinners.

Nay,

Nay, in this sort of sinning against the Holy Ghost there is mercy to very great degrees; for sometimes we do not hearken to his holy motions, but fall into more ordinary sins, and offensive indecencies, notwithstanding all his virtuous suggestions and endeavours to the contrary. He is then troubled and grieved at us; and at other times we venture upon more heinous crimes, and after much conflict too within ourselves, which always quite lays waste the conscience, and undoes all the virtuous temper and resolution of our souls. We lie long in our impenitence, as David did in the matter of Uriah, and are almost hardened in our wicked way, before we are able again to recover out of it. The Spirit has been so much affronted in these offences, and his importunate suggestions so frequently thrown out, that he is almost ready to forsake us, and to leave us to ourselves. Thus it may be called a "quenching of him;" But though the last of these especially be very dangerous, yet is neither of them desperate. After we have been guilty of them, God continues still to make offers and invitations, and by his long-sufferance and gracious providence, by the repeated calls of his word and ministers, he still endeavours to recover us to pardon by recalling us to repentance; therefore, the sinning against the Holy Ghost, as it signifies the ordinary gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, is far from being the unpardonable sin: Nor is a sin against the extraordinary gifts of casting out devils, healing diseases, working miracles, that unpardonable sin, which is here intended.

It is true, to blaspheme the Spirit comes very near it; and when men are once gone so far, God is very nigh giving them up, and using no more means about them to bring them either to faith or repentance, which are the only way to pardon and forgiveness. But tho' this pitch of sin be extreme dangerous, yet in great likelihood it is not wholly desperate. "For after all the dirt that men had thrown upon this evidence, in the miraculous operations wrought by Christ while he"

"continued

“ continued upon earth,” God was still pleased to use some means further to bring them to believe and repent, which is the way to be pardoned, and that was the evidence of the Holy Ghost, which came down to complete all after Jesus was glorified. This great proof was poured out upon the disciples at Pentecost, and upon other Christians at the imposition of their hands, for a good while after, and might effect that wherein the other had failed, and be acknowledged by those very men who had blasphemed the former. Their case therefore, notwithstanding it was gone so far, was not for all this quite hopeless, because one remedy still remained, which God resolved he would use to reclaim them from their infidelity, though after that he would try no more.

Of this I think we have a clear proof, even in those blasphemous Pharisees, whose reviling of the Spirit was the occasion of this discourse: For as for the Spirit, they blasphemed it in that very passage, when upon occasion of the “ miraculous cure of the man with the “ withered hand,” and of Christ’s “ casting out of devils” (both which were so manifestly wrought before their eyes, that none of them durst question or deny the working of them) they go blasphemously to charge these evident effects of the Spirit upon the power of magick, and to say that these works of God were performed by the devil. For when these mighty effects of the Spirit were urged to them in behalf of Jesus, they answered and said, “ This fellow doth not cast out devils but by “ Beelzebub the prince of the devils.” Here is a reproach to these miraculous gifts of the Spirit, as great as can be invented; for it is nothing less than an attributing them to the most foul and loathsome fiends in nature, even to the very devils themselves; but yet this blasphemy, as dangerous as it was, is not utterly exclusive of faith and repentance, and thereby unpardonable and hopeless. For our Lord himself, in this very chapter, speaks still of seeking their repentance, and gives

gives them a promise that some further means should be still used to cure their infidelity after they had blasphemed thus, telling these very men, that the sign of his death and resurrection, with the other evidences of the Holy Ghost which were to ensue upon it, should be a further argument to satisfy them in what they inquired after, "his being the Messiah or the Son of God. For when "certain of the Pharisees," presently upon finishing this discourse of their blaspheming the Holy Spirit, made answer to him, saying, "Master, we would see a "sign from thee," to confirm to us the truth of that pretension: He answered, "An evil and adulterous "generation seeketh a sign, and there shall no further "sign be given to it, but only the sign of the Prophet "Jonas," and that indeed shall. "For as Jonas was "three days and three nights in the whale's belly," and was afterwards delivered out of it to go and preach to the Ninevites, "so shall the Son of man be three "days and three nights in the heart of the earth," and after that rise again to preach by his Apostles to you and all the world, sending to you, for a further evidence still, the Holy Ghost.

And this unpardonableness of blaspheming the Spirit, our Saviour farther intimates in that very place, by a wary change of the phrase when he comes to speak of the unpardonableness of it, calling the unpardonable blasphemy not a blasphemy against the Spirit, who was the Spirit which was indeed blasphemed, and of which he had just made mention, but a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which being as St. John says "not yet "given," could not yet be blasphemed.

The desperate and unpardonable sin is a sin against the last and greatest evidence of all, "the gift of tongues, of "prophecy," and of other things, called the Holy Ghost. After all the other evidence that came before, to win men to a belief of Christ's religion, which is the only means of pardon to the world, God had still a reserve, and resolved upon some further course if they proved
ineffect-

ineffectual. If the "testimony of John Baptist to
 "Christ's being the Lamb of God;" if the "message
 "of an angel at his conception; the star at his birth;
 "and the choir of angels at his entrance into the
 "world:" If the "innocency of his life; wisdom of
 "his words;" and the "mightiness of his wonders;
 "in commanding the winds and seas; in curing disease
 "in casting out devils; in restoring the weak to strength,
 and the "dead to life:" If all these prove unsuccessful,
 and unable to persuade an infidel and perverse genera-
 tion, yet still God resolves to try one means more,
 which before that time the world never saw nor heard
 of, and that is the ample and most full effusion of the
 Holy Ghost upon the Apostles at Pentecost, and upon
 others at the imposition of their hands for a long time
 after.

But when once God had given this proof, he had
 done all he designed: For this is the last remedy which
 he had decreed to make use of to cure the infidelity of
 an unbelieving age. If therefore men shall use it, as
 they have done all that went before it; if instead of
 being persuaded by it, they shall proceed not only to
 slight and despise, but what is more, to revile and blas-
 pheme it; then is the irreversible decree gone out
 against them, and God is unalterably resolved to strive
 no more with them, but to let them die in their unbe-
 lief. If they should be won by it indeed, and believe
 upon it, be their former offences what they will (no
 less than a blaspheming of the Spirit) yet may they justly
 expect to be pardoned. For the offer of grace is universal:
 "Whosoever believes and is baptized, shall be saved:"
 And again, "Nothing is impossible to him that believeth."
 But when once men have gone so far as to be guilty
 of this, their sin is unpardonable, because their faith
 is impossible; for they have rejected all the evidence
 which any man can urge for their conviction, seeing
 they have despised all that which God has offered. Their
 infidelity is stronger than can be cured by any argu-
 ment that Christ either has or will afford to prevail
 over

over it; wherefore they must die in their sin, and there is no hope for them.

Indeed, if God please, there is no question, but after they have once blasphemed it, he can still so melt and soften, fashion and prepare their minds, that afterwards they shall hearken to the incomparable evidence of the Spirit and the Holy Ghost, which to an honest mind is irresistible. But this sin is of so provoking a nature, that when once they are guilty of it, he will not; he has past an irrevocable decree upon them, never more to meddle with them: Thus they never will be pardoned, because, as things stand, they never will be reclaimed. This is the very reason which the Apostle gives of the desperate state of apostate Christians; for by renouncing of that faith, which upon the evidence both of the Spirit and the Holy Ghost they had been before confirmed in, "they despise," says he, "the Spirit of grace," as it implies both the Spirit and Holy Ghost too; therefore, as for them, it is impossible to "renew them again unto repentance," that being such a sin as God will never give repentance to.

The sinning against the Holy Ghost in this sense then, as it denotes the gift of tongues, of prophesy, &c. which is the last evidence that God is resolved to make use of for the conversion of an unbelieving world, is that unpardonable sin which shall never be forgiven.

And yet even here in this limited and contracted sense of the word Holy Ghost, we must still proceed with some caution. For it is not every sin against and dishonour that is put upon these gifts, which is here said to be irremissible. Simon Magus cast a very high indignity and reproach upon them in his actions; for he went about to purchase the gift of tongues, and other sacred illuminations, called the Holy Ghost, which fell upon men at the imposition of the Apostles hands, as if they had been only a trick to get money, or a fit thing to drive a trade with, and make a gainful merchandize. "When Simon saw that through the laying
" on

“on of the hands of the Apostles, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,” saying, “Give me all this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.” This was a very great abuse, and a most unworthy comparing of the heavenly and Holy Spirit of God to a mercenary ware, and a vendible commodity, thinking it fit to serve any ends, and to minister to the basest purposes of a filthy lucre and covetousness. But yet this sin against the Holy Ghost, in its strictest acceptation, was not the unpardonable sin. It came very near it indeed, and it would hardly be remitted; yet still, in all likelihood, it was remissible. And therefore St. Peter, though he be very severe upon this fordid man for the high affront, does not pronounce an irreversible doom of damnation upon him; but, on the contrary, exhorts him to repent, that “the sin of his heart may be forgiven. Repent,” says he, “of this thy wickedness, and pray to God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven.”

That which is the desperately damning sin against the Holy Ghost, which shall never be forgiven below in this world, nor that which is to come, is the sinning against it not by interpretations only in our actions, but directly in our words and expressions. It is our speaking reproachfully and slanderously of it, as the Pharisees did of the Spirit, when they attributed it to Beelzebub. “Whosoever speaketh blasphemously against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.” The great weight lies in that, “they said he hath an unclean spirit,” which brought down this heavy doom upon them.

Thus at length we see what that sin against the Holy Ghost is, whose doom is so dreadful, and whose case is so desperate under the gospel. It is nothing less than a slandering and reviling, instead of owning and “assenting to that last evidence which God has given us of the truth of the gospel, in the gift of tongues, prophecy,
“and

"and other extraordinary illuminations, called the Holy Ghost." No man therefore who owns Christ's religion, and thinks he was no impostor; who believes that these miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were no magical shews, or diabolical delusion, can ever be guilty of it. Before he arrives to that, he must not only be an infidel to the faith, but also a blasphemer of it. He must not only disbelieve this last and great evidence, but disparage and rail at it. If then there be any man who owns Christ's authority, and obeys his laws, and believes his gospel, and hopes in its promises, and fears its threatenings, and expects that every word of that covenant, which was confirmed to us by the infallible evidence of the Spirit and the Holy Ghost, shall come to pass, he is not more guiltless of any sin than of this against the Holy Ghost; for he does not so much as slight and disparage, but owns and submits to it.

If good men therefore are afraid, by reason of the irremitableness of the sin against the Holy Ghost, they fear where they need not, and their scruple is utterly unreasonable and groundless. For let it be as unpardonable as it will, it shall never hurt them. They can never suffer by it, since while they continue such as now they are, they cannot possibly be guilty of it, or of any thing that comes near it.

Besides these scruples already mentioned, some good minds may be put in fear and doubt of the safety of their present state, because St. John says, that "whoever is born of God, sinneth not." Being no longer a "child of God," if he do the sin here spoken of, which is defined by St. John himself to be not every deviation, or going beside the law, but a wilful transgression, and rejecting of the law itself. This indeed is inconsistent with a regenerate state, and puts us out of God's favour, making us liable to eternal damnation. But then the case of these sins is not desperate, seeing if
once

once we forsake them, we are as safe again as ever we were before we committed them. For our repentance will set us straight; and if we transgress not wilfully again, we are without the reach of condemnation.

Others doubt whether when once they have wilfully sinned, they ever can repent, or shall afterwards be pardoned, because they read of Esau, that after he had sold his birth-right, with the blessing that attended it, "when he would have inherited it afterwards, he was rejected, and found no place" of a change of mind, or repentance, "though he sought it carefully with tears."

In answer to this, it will be sufficient to observe, that this change of mind or repentance which Esau sought, but could not find, was not in himself, but in his father Isaac.

He found a place for repentance in himself being really full of it. He was heartily sorry for his former folly, in parting with his birth-right, and for his present unhappiness, in being cozened of his father Isaac's blessing. He sought to have the sentence reversed with bitter cries and importunate desire, which clearly shews that Esau's own mind was changed abundantly.

But that repentance or change of mind which was necessary to the reversing of the blessing, for which he laboured hard, tho' without effect, was to be wrought in his father Isaac. The good old man had already pronounced the blessing upon Jacob; and when Esau most earnestly intreated him to reverse it, he told him flatly he would not. "I have blessed him," said he, "and he shall be blessed." The story, as it is there related, being plainly this.

When Isaac bid his son Esau provide him some venison, that he might eat of it, and bless him before he died; Jacob, by the assistance of his mother Rebecca, counterfeited both the person and the venison of Esau; and going in with it to his father before Esau returned,

craftily

craftily stole away the blessing from him. Esau coming in afterwards to receive the blessing, which Isaac his father had promised him, he tells him, that Jacob his brother had come with subtlety before him, and under a crafty disguise had taken it away from him. "For I have made him thy lord," says he, "and all his brethren have I given to him for servants." Tho' Esau intreated his father to reverse it, and "cried," as it is there said, "with an exceeding bitter cry," yet Isaac would not change his mind, or alter what he had pronounced. This reversion of the blessing, and repentance or change of mind in his father Isaac, was that which Esau endeavoured after, and which, as St. Paul says, "he sought carefully with tears." But as he observes out of this story, all was in vain, for it would not be granted him. When he "sought to inherit the blessing," his suit was not granted, but rejected; for Isaac's decree was past, and he "found no place of repentance," or way to make him change his mind, though he sought that change "carefully with tears."

The Apostle speaking of this thing, does not at all say, that it was "impossible for Esau to repent of his sins against God;" or that "God would not forgive him upon his repentance; but only that Isaac would not repent of his decree," or reverse that blessing which he had pronounced upon Jacob. Which inflexibleness of Isaac he does indeed make use of in these verses, to illustrate God's inexorableness towards some sinners; but then those are not all wilful sinners indifferently, but only apostates; who have wilfully renounced their Christianity, which, as we have seen before, is a sin that God will afford no more grace or place of repentance to. Which appears plainly from the foregoing verses, "Take care," says St. Paul, "lest that which is lame," or the weak Christian, "be turned out of the way" of his Christian profession through fears of persecution. "Look diligently lest any man fall" or fall from the grace or gospel of God. This he exhorteth

horted them the more earnestly to do, because if any man rejects all those gospel-blessings and privileges, which in that religion they had received, were then offered to him, and apostatized from them, God would never afford him the tender of them again, but would be as unalterable in his decree against him, as Isaac was in his against Esau. Who, as was shewn by his story, after he had once missed of the blessing, “ found
“ no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully
“ with tears.”

Others again are troubled in mind, and are afraid lest their souls are still in danger, because they do not perceive themselves to grow in grace, and to be increased in goodness. They complain that their spiritual life is at a stand, and that they are not more devout and piously affected, more virtuous and better Christians than they were for some considerable time before. This makes them jealous lest they should pass for idle servants, who have not used and improved their talents, and who shall be dealt with at the last day, as if they had abused them.

- “ To grow in grace,” we must observe, is the same thing as to grow in virtue and goodness, or to go on to higher measures of life and perfection in any, or in all the instances of duty and obedience. For an obedient life, as I have largely shewn, is the sole instance and proof of grace, which can render any of us acceptable in God’s sight, and upon which the gospel encourages us to hope for pardon and a happy sentence at the last judgment. Now, if any man’s life is more perfect than it was; if he grows in knowing and doing good, and keeping back from evil; if he begins to have a greater honour for God, to be more careful to please, and more afraid to offend him; if he is more forward to depend upon his providence, to trust in his promises, to resign himself up to his will, to submit to his pleasure, to praise him for all his excellencies, and to perform all
his

his precepts; if he is more humble and heavenly-minded, chaste, temperate, just, and charitable; if he is more meek and gentle, courteous and affable, quiet and peaceable; more ready to repair wrongs, and forgive injuries, than formerly: If he thus advances to higher measures, to greater ease, or to more constancy and evenness of obedience in any or in all instances of duty towards God and men; and that, in all relations, his virtue is in its spring: He is still going on, and growing in grace; for which God will accordingly reward him.

One particular virtue there is, which good Christians are wont to look at more especially in this matter; and that is prayer. They measure their growth in grace by their improvement in this, and think their spiritual life is then most perfect when their devotions are most enlarged. This they conclude they are not, when they are put up with the greatest humility and reverence, trust and dependence, submission and reasonableness to God Almighty, or with any other of those obedient tempers implied in prayer that are apt to influence our whole lives; but when they are accompanied with the most sensible joys, ravishing transports, and unusual height of fervency and affection. If then at any time they can pray more passionately, and put forth more intense desires; if they can work themselves up to more heavenly raptures, than ordinarily they have been able to attain to, they fancy they do indeed grow in grace, and are become higher in God's favour and acceptance. But if ever this service happens to be more irksome to them, and they discharge it with much backwardness and weariness, dulness and indifference, they think God frowns upon them, and has deserted them; that their grace is in a declining state, and sinking down to nothing.

But this is a very uncertain and dangerous mark for any man in this case to judge by, and will very often deceive him that builds upon it. For these fervent
heats

heats, and delightful transports of devotion are not so much a duty as a privilege, which all tempers cannot attain to, but those only that are naturally disposed for it: A growth in them is therefore not a growth in saving grace, but rather in sensible joy and happiness, and renders us not so truly gracious in God's eyes as happy in our own.

Besides, as an improvement in these religious and pleasing raptures is not a growth in grace itself, so neither is it always joined with it, and consequently no sure argument can be deduced from it; for it is easily observable, that several persons of devotional tempers, who are usually raised up to a high pitch, and ravished with most delightful transports in their prayers, are yet very dangerously defective in many instances of necessary duty, and a holy life. They fall often, even while they enjoy their blissful heats and heavenly raptures of devotion, into damning acts of fraud and injustice, anger and malice, strife and variance, fierceness and revenge. They live in them, and are habitually inflamed to them, and yet for all that, they find no want of this delight in prayer, nor any abatement of their devout intenseness of mind and earnest fervour of affection. However, these men being so maimed and partial in their sense, and having no intire obedience to confide in, they have not grace enough, as manifestly appears from what has been said upon that point, to bear them out, nor so much virtue as God has indispensably required to save them.

As for these qualifications of our prayers, those sensible joys and passionate transports which accompany them, they are no instances of obedience and saving grace themselves, nor any certain argument that those persons are endowed with it, who are allowed to enjoy them. They are frequently found in ill men, who so long as they rest there, and grow no better, cannot reasonably expect to go to heaven.

But for the other more acceptable and obedient tempers of our prayers, such as humble reverence, trust and dependence, submission and resignedness, &c. which the men of sober devotion most justly prefer before the former, as usually most others do when once their religious heats are over, though a growth in them is truly a growth in grace, yet a growth in them alone is not enough to save us: They indeed in themselves are so many particular instances of obedience; and besides that, they are also great means and proper instruments to produce others. Thus our growth in them is a growth in some particular graces, and a very likely way to grow in others also: But we must still remember, that they are but one part of saving grace, and by no means the whole; therefore, till we are grown in others too, we cannot hope to be saved by them; for this is the indispensable condition of the Christian religion; and this is the perfect man and just stature in the Christian faith, that we be grown up to an entire obedience in all our voluntary and chosen actions, not only to some few but to all the parts of duty, and the laws of God.

But if we would single out some one or some few virtues from our growth and improvement, whereby we may justly presume that we have attained to saving degrees in all the rest; St. James directs us to the duties of the tongue, in abstaining from backbiting, censuring, and evil-speaking, which under all the invitations of conversation, and the temptation of common life, is usually the last point that good men gain, and that in which they, who scarce ever sin wilfully at all, or very rarely, are wont most frequently, through indeliberateness and unadvisedness, to miscarry. "If any man," says he, "offend not in word," but has attained to an innocent and obedient guidance of his tongue, that same man need not be defective in other duties, "he is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

Thus

Thus is mens growth in saving grace not only in some one or in some few virtues, but in an universal and entire obedience; and then they grow in it when they come to perform the same with more ease and measure, constancy and evenness; with less mixture of voluntary sins, which need particular repentance, and with a greater freedom from innocent and unwilling infirmities. And this growth every Christian is bound incessantly to endeavour after. The longer he lives, the higher improvement he ought to make, and to attain every virtue in a larger measure, in greater firmness and perfection than he had before. "Grow in grace," says St. Peter, and "in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Forgetting those things which are behind me," and already attained, says St. Paul, and "reaching out after those things which are still before me, I press on forward towards the mark," that I may acquire a more complete growth than I yet have; and let "as many among you as be perfect, be thus minded."

But then the obligation to this growth in this intire obedience, is not laid upon them under the forfeiture of heaven, but only of some higher rewards and greater degrees of happiness, which are to be enjoyed there. For there are different degrees of happiness, answerable to the different measures of growth. In this intire obedience they that perform it most perfectly, shall be rewarded highest; and the more fixed and perfect they are in it, the less danger are they under of falling back from it. They who perform it, although they miss of that accession of reward, which by the grace of the gospel is due to an eminent height of obedient endeavours, shall yet obtain the pardon of their sins, and a state of joy and blessedness in heaven, as well as they who have endeavoured and performed more.

For our entire obedience in all chosen actions, and a particular repentance and amendment of all those sins, in which at any time we have wilfully disobeyed God, is sufficient to secure the blessedness of the next

life. And therefore, if any person has used God's grace, and improved his talents to this measure, he has not been unprofitable and useless, but has profited so far as is necessary to his happiness. While we are yet in the more imperfect measures of it, and only thirst after a more perfect obedience, that we may still be more acceptable to God, and have 'right to a more noble and excellent reward, we are in a safe state, and have no need to disquiet our souls with fears and jealousies lest they should eternally miscarry.

Several other scruples there are which are wont to disquiet and perplex the mind of good and honest people, who are safe in God's account, though their case seems never so hazardous in their own. Of this sort are their fear, that their obedience is insincere, because they have an eye at their own good, and a respect to their own safety; since they serve God in hopes to be better by him, and out of fear, should they disobey, of suffering evil from him. They are afraid also that it is defective in a main point, for they cannot love and serve him in that comprehensive latitude which the commandment requires; "With all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their mind." They doubt they are past grace and pardon, because they have sinned after they have been enlightened, and that wilfully; and the Apostle affirms, that "for such there remains no more sacrifice for sins." These doubts are still apt to disturb their peace and make sad their hearts, as are also some others of the like nature.

But we have seen when an honest and intire obedience is taken care for in the first place, how plainly groundless those fears are which are wont to perplex the thoughts of the good and safe, yet ignorant and misguided people, about their state of happiness and salvation.

Upon the whole matter, the sum of all amounts to this: When Christ shall come to sit in judgment at the last day, and to pass sentence of life or death upon every man according to the direction of his gospel, he will
pronounce

pronounce upon every man "according to his works." If he has honestly and intirely obeyed the whole will of God in all the particular laws before-mentioned; never wilfully and deliberately offending in any instance, nor indulging himself in the practice of any thing which he knows to be a sin, he is safe in the accounts of the last judgment, and shall never come into condemnation: Nay, if he has been a damnable offender, and has wilfully transgressed, either in one instance or in many, in frequent repetitions of his sin, or in few; yet if he repent of it before death seize him, and amend it ere he is haled away to judgment, he is safe still; for he shall be judged according as his works then are, when God comes to enquire of them. Wherefore, if ever he be found in an honest obedience, observing every thing which he sees to be his duty, and wilfully venturing upon nothing which his conscience tells him is sinful, he is found in the state of grace and pardon; and if he die in it, he shall be saved; all his unwilling ignorances, and innocent unadvisednesses, upon his prayers for pardon, and his mercifulness and forgiveness of other men, shall be abated; all his other causes of fear and scruple shall be overlooked. They shall not be brought against him to his condemnation, but in the honest and intire obedience which he has performed, he shall live.

If then we have an honest heart, and walk so as our own conscience has no wilful sin yet unrepented of to accuse us of, we may meet death with a good courage, and go out of the world with comfortable expectations. For if we have an honest and tender heart, whenever we sin wilfully, and against our consciences, our own souls will be our remembrancers. They will be a witness against us, both while we are in this world, and after we are taken out of it, and brought to judgment. "Mens consciences," says St. Paul, "shall accuse or excuse them in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel."

Indeed if men have hardened their hearts in wickedness, and sinned themselves out of the belief of their duty, have come to call evil good, and good evil; their conscience having no farther sense of sin, will have no accusations upon it. But if they really believe the gospel, and study to know their duty; if they desire to observe it, and are afraid of offending in any thing which they see is sinful; while thus their heart is soft, and their conscience tender, they cannot venture upon any sin with open eyes, but their own hearts will both check them before, and smite them afterwards. They will have a witness against them in their own bosoms, which will so scourge and awaken them, that they cannot approach death without a sense of their sin, or go out of the world without discerning themselves to be guilty.

If our conscience then cannot accuse us of the wilful and presumptuous breach of any of God's commandments, and we know of none but what we have repented of; we have just reason to take a good heart to ourselves, and to wait for death in hopeful expectations. "If our own hearts condemn us not," says St. John, "then have we confidence towards God." There is no sin that will damn us but a wilful one; and when we sin wilfully, if our heart is soft and honest, we sin willingly, and against our conscience. Our own heart sees and observes it before, and will keep us in mind of it, after we have committed it. Therefore if any man has a virtuous and tender heart, a heart that is truly desirous to obey God, and afraid in any thing to offend him; when his conscience is silent, he may justly conclude that his condition is safe; for if it does not condemn him, God never will.

An honest man's heart must condemn him, before he has sufficient reason to condemn himself; and that too not for every idle word, or every fruitless lust, or every voluntary dulness of spirit, and distraction in prayer, and coldness in devotion, or such other mistaken

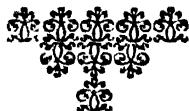
taken marks by which too many are wont to judge of their title to salvation. Heaven and hell are not made to depend upon these things; but though a man be guilty of them, he may notwithstanding be eternally happy. But that accusation of his conscience, which may give an honest man just reason to condemn himself, must be an accusation for a wilful breach or deliberate transgression of some particular law of sobriety, piety, justice, charity, peaceableness. It must accuse him of an unrepented breach of some of those laws abovementioned, which God has plainly made terms of life, and the condition of salvation.

And the accusation for the breach of these laws must be particular and express, not general and roving. For some are of so suspicious and timorous a temper, that they are still suspecting and condemning of themselves when they know not for what reason. They will indict themselves as men who have sinned greatly, but they cannot shew in what. They judge of themselves, not from any reason or experience, but at a venture and by chance. They speak not so truly their opinions as their fears, nor what their understandings see and discern, but what their melancholy suggests to them. For ask them as to any one particular of the law of God, and run them all over, and their consciences cannot charge them with any wilful and unrepented transgression of it. But let them overlook all particulars, and pass a judgment of themselves only in general, when they do not judge from particular instances, which are true evidence, but only from groundless and small presumptions, and then they pass a hard sentence upon themselves, concluding their sins are very great, and their conditions very dangerous.

However, no man shall be sentenced at the last day for notions and generalities; but they are our particular sins which must then condemn us. For God's laws bind us all in single actions; and if our own consciences cannot condemn us for any one wilful and un-

repented action, God will not condemn us for them all together.

If our own heart therefore does not accuse us for the particular, wilful, and unrepented breaches of some or other of these laws above-mentioned, which God has made the rule of our life, and our observation of which he hath made the indispensable condition of our acceptance, we are secure as to the next world, and may comfortably hope to be acquitted in the last judgment. Being conscious of no wilful sin, but what we have repented of, and begging pardon through Christ for our involuntary sins, we shall have nothing that will be heavy upon us at the last day, but may go out of the world with ease, and die in comfort. Our departure hence may be in peace, because our appearance at God's tribunal shall be in safety; for we shall have nothing worse charged upon us there, than we are able here to charge upon ourselves. But leaving this world with a good conscience, we shall be sentenced in the next to a glorious reward, and bid to enter into our Master's joy, there to live with our Lord for ever and ever.





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